CATEGORY MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC PROCESSES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A PHENOMENOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION OF THE Lived EXPERIENCES OF PROCUREMENT MANAGERS

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Abstract

Increasingly tight financial constraints have meant category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processes have been adopted and integrated into the public sectors including English local government authorities (LGAs). The extant literature, however, argues that empirical research in these areas are underdeveloped especially in relation to competency and competencies. Therefore, this study aims to qualitatively investigate the different experiences of procurement managers in LGAs in England in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

The research methodology adopted is phenomenography, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews from a purposive sample of ten procurement managers. The data were analyzed following phenomenographic principles to identify the referential and structural aspects of experience. Ultimately, three main conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes are identified: Stakeholder Management; Socio-Technical Knowledge; and Achievement Orientation.

This study not only expands the research context of phenomenography, but also contributes to the understanding of procurement managers' conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The implications for procurement professionals are discussed.

Keywords: Conceptions of Competency; Category Management and Strategic Sourcing Processes; Procurement Managers; Experiences; English Local Government; Phenomenography

Declaration

"The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another HEI except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit."

Signed: 

Date: 9th September 2020

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 An Introduction to the study

This thesis qualitatively investigates the experiences of Procurement Managers' (PMs') in English Local Government (ELG) in terms of their competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of Category Management (CM) and Strategic Sourcing (SS) processes in the workplace. The chapter starts by outlining the background to the research and the research aims and objectives. Details of the research design are also outlined including a consideration of the application of phenomenographic research approach, to help provide an insight and direct the research. The concluding sections of the chapter provide an outline on the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background to the research study

Over a decade ago, category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processes were integrated into the public sector, including within local governments in England. CM and SS processes refer to the "categorization of goods and services and then for managing these categories as 'business units' in order to achieve improved outcomes" (Richmond-Smith et al., 2010: 2), in the case of this study, for services provided by public sector organisations. According to Richmond-Smith et al. (2010), the processes are said to be "the most efficient and effective way" of delivering services for children, young people and families (Richmond-Smith et al., 2010: 2).

The National Procurement Strategy for local government (2018: 10) gave an impulse to strategic procurement by stating that category management and strategic sourcing processes are a way of:

> *"unifying the processes associated with the specification, researching, sourcing, contracting and delivery, so as to bring with it significant financial and business benefits, meaning unit-cost reduction, improved quality of service and better engagement and performance by contractors".*

1.3 Practice problem

The procurement of products, goods, and services by public organisations is being "recognised as a major market force" (Obwegeser et al., 2018: 1). Procurement in local government authorities (LGAs) is responsible for some of the highest levels of spending in the economy because LGAs need to purchase goods - items such as pens, paper, laptops, desks; works - the construction, repair and maintenance of assets such as roads and services - the delivery of functions such as adult social care, IT support, human resources and consultancy for public services across a number of industries including healthcare, education and infrastructure. This procurement is performed in line with budget constraints, and takes place on a mass scale. Procurement by ELG represents around £74 billion of public expenditure. According to Brien (2018: 2), this expenditure is "almost a quarter of the total £284 billion of annual expenditure in procurement in the United Kingdom". Procurement by LGAs is expected to address a wide range of social and policy goals, such as "sustainability, skills and innovation" (Grandia, 2019: 2), however the current economic environment presents a number of challenges for local government authorities who are operating under tight financial constraints. Local government have to balance the demand for good quality public services and deliver efficiency gains whilst also at the same time providing opportunities to encourage creativity and innovation in suppliers, enabling a contestable supplier market, and coping with a procurement model as a "centralised or de-centralised procurement" organisation (Patrucco et al., 2019: 2; Bals et al., 2018: 2). The ability to meet these goals is constantly facing disruption, some examples include 'technologies', which requires the use of electronics and digital communication system, which impacts industry infrastructure, business dynamic capabilities, customer and organizational behavioural change, work organisation and workforce competency. Furthermore, LGA has to cope with the uncertainties of economic downturn, and more recently the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) in the supply network, as well as "having to align purchasing maturity to contingencies" (Baier et al., 2008: 3). Meanwhile, the transformation of the public sector confers local government with a greater responsibility to shape the communities they serve, with a greater role for procurers and commissioners in addressing the needs of local residents.

The practice of category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processes in LGAs is "complex and dynamic" in nature (Bals et al., 2019: 2). The processes are complex because there are so many driving factors, such as national procurement policy and regulation, intra-organisational, inter-organisation and inter-personal relationships and intra-personal traits, in combination with cross-functional competencies that are required for the effective delivery of the processes. The processes are dynamic because the aspects and facets of goods, products and services are multidimensional and variable and require differential strategies, and the use of data analytics to improve decision-making, which helps procurement managers to remain agile throughout the processes. According to the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) category management guide (2019: 4), a successful and effective category management and strategic sourcing strategy constitutes a “multitude of areas including: supplier relationship management; supplier evaluation and approval; effective communication incorporating soft skills; market analysis; competitive forces and external factors; stakeholder identification and management; sustainable and ethical procurement, and team leadership and management". To achieve all of these variables requires effective competency and competencies that take into account the uniqueness of local government organisations and resources.

There are extant literatures that cover procurement competency frameworks such as the Procurement Professional Skills and Competency Framework (2012), National Competency Framework (2018) and the CIPS Global Standard for Procurement and Supply Competency Framework (2018), which outline the required knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals based on their professional level. But the reality is that there are very few practitioners of category management and strategic sourcing with the necessary mature competencies, knowledge and skills to be able to “deliver holistically” what is required, for the implementation of effective and successful category management and strategic sourcing processes in local government (Bals et al., 2019: 3).

The practice of category management and strategic sourcing is governed by the CIPS Global Standard for Procurement and Supply Competency Framework (2018), as shown in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. The CIPS Global Standard for Procurement and Supply Competency Framework (2018), provides the required competency and competencies by professional level of attainment. However, from the researcher's experience, the argument brought forward by procurement practitioners is that the standard is under-developed in comparison with the competency criteria actually required, in view of the dynamic nature of competencies which shape individual capabilities and the nature of category management and strategic sourcing for services. This is especially true in the case of local government organisations, where the practice of category management is “functionally led (for example customer or end-user-led) and strategic sourcing tend to be purchasing led processes” (Apte et al., 2019: 170).

The research aim and objectives for the present study are outlined as:

1.4 Research aim

The research aim is to qualitatively investigate the different experiences of procurement managers (PMs) in English local government (ELG) in terms of their competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

1.5 Research objectives

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008) underline the importance of clearly defined research objectives before selecting the methods of data collection in management research. The research objectives for this study flow from the research questions and are summarised as follows:

Objective One: To analyse the qualitatively different experiences of PMs’ in ELG in terms of competency and competencies in accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes (supported by RQ1).

Objective Two: To critically appraise the qualitatively different aspects of the experiences of PMs in ELG (supported by RQ1, RQ2).

Objective Three: To analyse the critical incident event aspects of the experiences of PMs in ELGs in relation to the underlying characteristics of competency (supported by RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3).

1.6 Introduction to the research design

In order to describe the different experiences of PMs in ELG in a qualitative fashion, it is necessary to employ a methodology that seeks specifically to uncover experiences of a given phenomenon.

Phenomenography is an emerging methodological research approach in the field of procurement and within the supply management education research community. Critical variations exist across studies regarding the use of phenomenography as a methodological approach, with areas of study as diverse as Religious Education (Hella and Wright, 2009); Nursing students' experiences (Barry et al., 2017); Teachers Educations conceptions (Montenegro, 2020); Informing Teaching (Richard and Jessop, 2018); Science Education (Han and Ellis, 2019) and Organisational studies (Rocha-Pinto et al., 2019), to mention a few. Even though phenomenography is used as a methodological approach in various other disciplines, however, in this research study, the researcher contributes to this area of scholarship through researcher reflection, academic discussion and a synthesis of experiences of using phenomenographic research, as an approach in which to examine experiences of PMs in ELG and their competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the utilisation of CM and SS processes.

A phenomenographic research approach has been selected because of its focus on understanding the different ways that individuals experience phenomena in their lived world (Marton, 1997). In this present research study, phenomenographic research approach has been selected to provide an insight into the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

The research participants in this study are PMs in ELG, who have had three years or more experience of implementing CM and SS processes both in the public and private sector with a commercial exposure in England. The PMs were drawn from ELG organisations whose level of procurement expenditure is large enough to warrant the use of CM and SS processes as a strategic business tool to leverage their spending power, and from ELG organisations that had fully adopted and implemented the use and practice of CM and SS processes. The research used a purposive sample. Marton (1997: 97), expressed that terms used in research "need not be limited because the different ways a phenomena can be experienced, perceived, apprehend, understood or conceptualised is according to the ways of describing them". In this study, the terms experience, conceptualise, perceive and understand are used interchangeably.

1.7 Data collection

Semi-structure interviews were used as data collection methods. Marton (1986: 420) assert that although "conceptions may be revealed in different ways including drawing in studying the behaviour of individuals and the product of their work" but nevertheless, that “conceptions are most readily accessed through language”, a view agreed to by Svensson (1997: 166). “Phenomenographic interviews” are also recommended by Kvales (1983: 174). As Bruce (1997: 98) contends, “the interviewer’s focus is neither on the person, nor on the theme, but rather on how the theme appears to, or is experienced by the person being interviewed”.

1.8 Personal reasons for the research focus

The motivation for conducting the present research study into the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG came about following the publication of the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in England (2018), the CIPS Global Standard for Procurement and Supply (2018), the ensuing publication of procurement and commissioning strategy documents from LGAs across the country in England, and in addition, due to the cross-functional relations with public procurement practitioners within the researcher's organisation.

1.9 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is comprised of five chapters. In Chapter One, the thesis is introduced. The background and purpose of the study are outlined and the research aims and objectives are established. Phenomenography is presented as the research approach employed, and a summary design is given. Chapter Two examines the literature relevant to the research in order to provide a context for the study, leading to the building of a conceptual framework for the study. Chapter Three is a detailed discussion of the methodology, research process, theoretical framework and variation theory underpinning the methodological approach of phenomenography. Phenomenography is presented as the research approach employed to conduct the study. The rationale for employing phenomenography is given and other methodologies that were considered are discussed. The chapter continues by describing the philosophical underpinning of the research approach and presenting a description of the data collection and analysis methods. Chapter Three concludes by addressing issues relating to the validity and reliability of the study. Chapter Four presents the research findings, data presentation and discussions. In phenomenographic analysis, the category of description (CoD) forms part of the outcome space (OS) through the analysis of the relationships between them. The three categories of description that emerge from the data are analysed and described, and the relationships between the categories are detailed. Chapter Four also includes the discussion, and the implications of the result as derived from the category of description and outcome space. Chapter Five reports the conclusions, contribution, implications, limitations, recommendations and reflections of the research, and additionally addresses future research.

1.10 Summary

This chapter has introduced the focus of the research. This is an investigation into the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The background to the research, aim and objectives has been outlined along with the research design. An overview of the structure of the thesis is presented. A detailed review of the literature that sets the research in context is provided below in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is to demonstrate awareness of the current state of knowledge of the concepts of category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processes, which forms part of a broader aspect of procurement and supply management (PSM) discipline. The concept of competency and competencies was reviewed as a way of invigorating the researcher's understanding of the current state of knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015; Rowley et al., 2014), so as to inform, provide the foundation for the thesis and serves as a framework for relating new findings to previous findings (Creswell, 2009; Randolph, 2009).

The aim of the study is to:

> *Investigate the qualitatively different experiences of procurement managers in English local government, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes*

In order to create a sound foundation and achieve the aim, four key strands of literature were consulted for this research. These are category management, strategic sourcing, competency (singular) and competencies (plural) and local government. This chapter will thoroughly review the concepts of category management, strategic sourcing and competency, with particular focus on the "individual (micro) level foundation of PSM competency/competencies of organizational PSM performance" (Bals et al., 2019: 2). The process of the literature review begins by evaluating key theoretical perspectives, concepts and ideas, and through making an explicit statement that this thesis draws upon applying the "individual (Micro) foundation level of competency (singular) competencies (plural)" of organizational PSM performance (Bals et al., 2019: 2), as it applies to category management and strategic sourcing processes within the organisational context of ELG. The approach enables the researcher to extend the concept into the local government sector with the intention of creating a typology of local government competency for category management and strategic sourcing. The conceptual framework is summarised in section 2.6.1 and informs the research objectives and questions. The dimensions covered address the aim, objectives and research questions of the thesis, focusing on the interpretation and granularity of competencies to competency in association with CM and SS processes in ELG.

2.1.1 The Literature review approach

Defining the scope of a literature review is said to be a critical step, and if the literature review scope is too broad then the focus of the research may be lost, and conversely if the focus is too narrow, then it may not be possible to fully contextualise the problem within the discipline (Randolph, 2009). This chapter reflects elements of a literature review as suggested by Cronin et al., (2008) and Onwuegbuzie et al., (2012). Firstly, the chapter reflects a traditional literature review, which adopts a critical approach to assessing theories in the field of purchasing and supply management (PSM), in which CM and SS is a discipline and also the concept of competency is raised. Secondly, the research reflects a state-of-the-art review, bringing readers up to date on the most recent research centred on CM and SS and competency. Thirdly, the research reflects a conceptual review: synthesising the areas of conceptual knowledge, enabling a better understanding of the issues, and sets the broad context for the study, clearly demarcating from what is and what is not within the scope of the investigation and justifying those decisions.

This approach enables the researcher not only to summarise the existing literature but also to synthesise it in a way that permits a new perspective, thereby demonstrating an awareness of the current state of knowledge. This means that the research is “not done in a vacuum” (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012: 4), but interrelates the key issues, concepts, theories and methodologies which define the fields of the study (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). However, an earlier study by Cooper (1988) and a subsequent paper at the AERA (American Educational Research Association) by Sipe et al., (1996) on developing taxonomy of the literature review, suggested four ways in which the literature review could be approached in order to assist researchers with how to define the process. This suggestion forms part of the six characteristics that classifies literature review. These characteristics include: "focus of attention, goal of the synthesis, perspective on the literature, coverage of the literature, organization of the presentation, and intended audience" (Sipe et al., 1996: 1). This scoping characteristic according to Cooper (1988: 6) is called “coverage”. The types of coverage are defined and outlined below as:

1. **Exhaustive Review**: In which all literature is included or at least most of it, with virtually no exclusion criteria;
2. **Exhaustive review with selection criteria**: In which the literature search contains at least two databases and contains exclusion criteria, which eliminates portions of the literature;

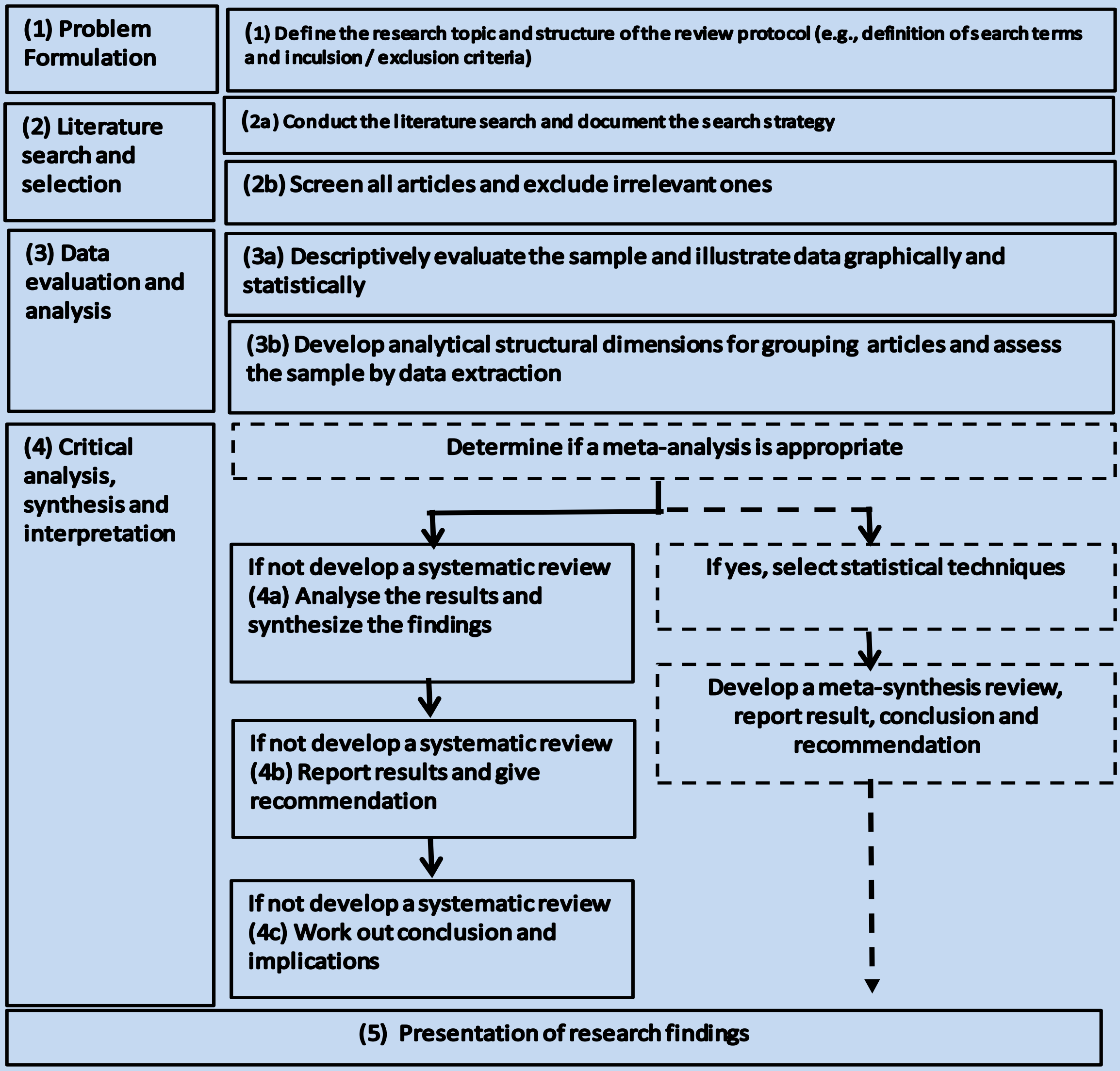
3. **Representative sample of literature**: In which only one journal or one source for the primary studies is used; and
4. **Central or pivotal (purposive) literature**: In which literature from previous reviews or meta-analysis of studies is included.

The researcher contends that Cooper's (1988: 6) taxonomy of literature review fits this research because a “purposive” strategy has been employed, which enables the researcher to clearly define the research problem and develop the research question by positioning the study within its discipline and broader theoretical domains, whilst maintaining the use of relevant literature.

2.1.2 Rationale for methods underpinning literature review and selection

In order to review the literature in a transparent and productive way, it is a requirement that methodological rigour is applied in searching for and evaluating the literature. The researcher established robust search criteria. The researcher followed the approach of Hochren et al., (2012) and Bals et al., (2019), of aiming to provide a review of the key conceptual and empirical publications within the areas of CM and SS processes and competency that are published in business management journals and trade reports. Even though a number of reviews have been published that analyse topics related to purchasing and supply management, limited framework exists which supports researchers in reviewing the literature in the domain of competency, in relation to CM and SS processes. However, for the purpose of the literature review chapter, the researcher adopts the systematic literature review (SLR) method, following the approach of Hochren et al., (2012) in establishing the search criteria, and these principles render the review replicable and transparent. In terms of the range of academic sources, the researcher builds upon the foundations of Sanderson et al., (2015) and Bals et al., (2019) by bringing their selected articles into the scope of the researcher's review. In addition, this literature review further extends the chronological range of previous reviews, by bringing into scope relevant articles in the same journals written in subsequent years, up until June 2020. This review also extends the range of sources, by searching a database with a broader coverage, similar to those used by Hochren et al., (2012), Sanderson et al., (2015) and Bals et al., (2019). This enabled an exploration of the fullest possible breadth of coverage of the topic, subject to the practical constraints of time and resources imposed upon a sole researcher. The process framework is outlined in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Guideline for Systematic Literature Review process adopted in this Research



Source: Adapted from Hochren et al (2012)

2.1.3 The searching criteria

In order to establish robust search criteria, this research followed the contention of Hochren et al., (2012: 4) that in order to facilitate the reproducibility of the literature sample, "it is necessary to specify the procedure for searching relevant works as well as criteria both of reliability (replicability of the research process) and validity (correct implementation of a search strategy)". In this research study, the literature review protocol used for inclusion and exclusion criteria and for the coding headings and definitions, as suggested by Hochren et al., (2012), is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Literature review selection criteria

	Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
1	Context	Articles in the context of purchasing supply management and articles focusing on the concepts of competency and competencies and purchasing alignment	Articles not related to the concept of category management and strategic sourcing and competency key elements For Category Managements, elements such as: category planning buying, IT, mergers and acquisitions, engineering, governance, banking, innovation, project management, sociology, marketing and HR	To ensure articles support answering research question
2	Topical fit e.g. category management and strategic sourcing and competency/competencies	Papers on all forms of category management and strategic sourcing and competency / competencies key elements. For example: For Category management key elements such as: * Category Planning; *Implementation; *Spend & Savings Management; *Compliance Management and Monitoring; *Price Management; *Continuous improvement; *Supplier performance monitoring; *Re-sourcing; and *Stakeholder management For Strategic Sourcing, key elements such as: * Supply base management (SBM); *Cross-Functional group; *Process-driven approach; and *Strategic orientation For Competency/Competencies, key elements such as: *Knowledge, Skills, Motives, Traits, Self-concepts	Supply chain management with focus other than purchasing (e.g. planning or logistics) or focusing on a special aspect of purchasing without reference to key elements of category management and strategic sourcing and competency/competencies.	To ensure articles support answering research question
4	Publication Type	Peer-reviewed, scholarly and academic papers and practitioners publications and books	Online Blogs and newspapers publications, magazines and proceedings, working papers, theses, books	To ensure methological rigour and comprehensiveness
5	Date of Publication	From 2010 to 2020 and may include few relevant articles outside the range obtained through snowballing	Most articles published earlier than 2010	To ensure rigour and relevance. To include development of core concepts over time
6	Language	English	All other languages	To avoid errors in translation
7	Sector / Industry	All	None	To include differences between industries and avoid bias
8	Research Method	All	None	To avoid bias

Source: Structure Adapted from Watson et al. (2015) and Britta et al., (2019)

Each article was classified based on a formal analysis of bibliographical data: author names and title, year of publication, journal name, type of article (empirical, non-empirical!), methodology, research field and objectives, main findings, implications, nature of context, CM and SS intervention mechanism (key elements). In this research, the keyword search is as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Keywords and search terms.

Buyer	Category management	Local government	Competency
(Purchasing OR purchaser)	strategic sourcing	local authority	competencies
Procurement		local council	knowledge
			skills
			motives
			traits
			self-concepts

OR

AND

Source: Structure Adapted from L. Bals, et al. (2019)

The databases used for the key word search were Google Scholar and ABI/INFORM Global (ProQuest). These two databases were chosen because according to Harzing and Alakangas (2016) and Sanderson et al., (2015), the databases were said to be "provide a broader coverage and thus higher research metrics" when contrasted with other database such as Web of Science or Scopus (Harzing et al., 2016: 801), across a range of fields and disciplines including the social sciences, humanities, marketing, strategy, business management and multidisciplinary research. The database has been used extensively by scholars in purchasing and supply management such as Bals et al., (2019) and Sanderson et al., (2015). In the search, quotation marks were used as a Boolean operator, so as to return an exact match of key words that are compound words such as "category management", "strategic sourcing" or "local government". A summary of this is displayed in Table 3 below:

Table3 Structure of Key words Search term Grouping

Groups	Key words and search terms
A	"category management" AND ("local government" OR "local council" OR "local authority")
B	"strategic sourcing" AND ("local government" OR "local council" OR "local authority")
C	(competency OR competencies OR knowledge OR skills OR motives OR traits OR self-concept) AND "category management"
D	(competency OR competencies OR knowledge OR skills OR motives OR traits OR self-concept) AND "strategic sourcing"
E	(competency OR competencies OR knowledge OR skills OR motives OR traits OR self-concept) AND "category management" AND "strategic sourcing"
F	(competency OR competencies OR knowledge OR skills OR motives OR traits OR self-concept) AND "category management" AND "strategic sourcing" AND (buyer OR purchasing OR purchaser OR procurement)
G	(competency OR competencies OR knowledge OR skills OR motives OR traits OR self-concept) AND "category management" AND "strategic sourcing" AND (buyer OR purchasing OR purchaser OR procurement) AND ("local government" OR "local council" OR "local authority")

The summaries of all of the 2793 articles identified in the initial search were skimmed through and downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet and reviewed using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Further evaluation of the articles was conducted using the protocol as suggested by Easterby-Smith et al., (2015: 15):

Purpose: What is the purpose of the source? What are the motivations or interests that led to its creation?

Authorship: Who is responsible for the source? Are the authors or producers authorities in this subject?

Credibility and accuracy: Why is this credible information? Do the authors give enough information? Is this information mentioned in peer-reviewed sources?

In addition to this, the researcher adopted a suggestion brought forward by Hochren et al., (2012) on how to define assessment criteria for evaluating the methodological rigour of the systematic literature review, particularly in the field of purchasing and supply management (PSM), in which CM and SS are disciplines. The evaluation criteria guidelines for SLR in PSM as suggested by Hochren et al., (2012) are shown in Appendix 4. The search and review generated an extensive list of key elements of the concepts of CM and SS, competency and local government issues. This search review found 173 articles (ranging from empirical to non-empirical), that were published in the field of PSM and dated from between 2010 to May 2020, including 'snowball' articles from bibliography references, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Search strings results by process steps

	Search Strings Database Step Description	Google Scholar	ProQuest (ABI INFORM)	Total
1	Initial results	1725	1068	2793
2	After: Title and Abstract Screening and Date Range and Relevance and minus Exclusion	539	345	884
3	After: Removal of Duplicate	176	20	196
4	Full Text Screening (paper taken forward to analysis)	65	10	75
5	Additional papers through reference search (SNOWBALL papers also taken to analysis)	96	2	98
	TOTAL substantive relevant publications considered	**161**	**12**	**173**

The researcher read all of the 173 publications in their entirety and ensured that they were aligned with CM and SS processes, competency and competencies and local government. The 173 publications were considered relevant and sufficient to present an adequate overview of the topic. The researcher categorised and structured the selected publications by using an analytical scheme (matrix) as suggested by Seuring and Gold (2012), and adopted a content analysis approach. Firstly, the researcher conducted a descriptive analysis and obtained the following information provided by the publication: author(s), year, journal, title, industry and methodology. For the analysis, the researcher applied an interpretative synthesis based on the core content of the publication and the topic concept as suggested by Dale et al., (2012), and as shown in Appendix 5. The researcher used a synthesis matrix guide as suggested by Ingani et al., (2006). An example excerpt of this study synthesis is shown in Appendix 6. The researcher coded the publications based on subject area topic and issues of discussion. This was necessary because the subject areas of the topic being investigated are interrelated topics with numerous aspects and facets, with ramifications at an individual and organisational level.

2.1.4 Precursor of the remaining sections

Given the aim outlined in the introduction to Chapter 2, the structure of the chapter is set out in three sections. There is a focus on the concept of CM and SS. This part starts with a broad discussion of the concept of CM and SS. This inductive approach enables the researcher to have in-depth understanding of what CM and SS processes are and what they entail. This has been considered as an effective tactic to achieve Objective 1 of the research: enhancing the understanding of the complexity of the concept of CM and SS processes and the awareness of the wide-ranging alternative definitions of the concepts. Furthermore, the characteristics of competency are evaluated with a focus predominantly on CM and SS processes. This enables the researcher, in addition, to have a better understanding of the micro-foundation and macro-foundation enabling CM and SS.

Also evaluated is the concept of competency (singular) and competencies (plural) and the issues of the concepts in relation to CM and SS processes, as well as the implications for local government authorities (public sector organisations). The final evaluation draws upon the main points discussed in relation to the conception in a logical manner and the research elements are integrated.

2.2 Dimension One: Concepts of Category Management and Strategic Sourcing

2.2.1 Introduction

The intention of and scope for this systematic review centred on category management and strategic sourcing is to examine the insight given by wider literature, focusing on the concept, assumptions, issues, process and the variability of its use within public and private sector organisations.

2.2.2 Concept of Category Management

The concept of category management (CM), according to Pradham (2016), has its origin in retailing and purchasing, where the range of products purchased by a business or organisation, or sold by a retailer, is broken down into discrete groups of similar or related products. These groups are known as product categories. For example, in “grocery categories, these might be tinned fish, washing detergent, tooth pastes as in retailing” (Goic et al., 2013: 10). If that is the case, in order to provide a consistent approach towards these various products, how is CM defined?

2.2.2.1 Definition of Category Management

There are numerous definitions of category management, and due to the lack of a single definition this leads to ambiguity, even among professionals, as to its exact function (Peter, 2011). Several definitions are provided in extant literature. The variation in the definitions goes as far back as two decades ago and provides insight into the purpose of CM and its conceptual use. For example in the retail industry, CM is defined as a process utilised to satisfy the customer and as a flexible organisational approach to focus the attention of suppliers on thier usefulness as a strategic business unit to deliver consumer value (Nielsen, 1992; IDDA, 1993; Joint industry report on efficient consumer responses, 1995). In more recent times, CM is defined as an organizational approach focusing on supply market as a way of managing business unit to achieve improved outcome and business objectives in the public sector (CIPS, 2009, 2011; Richmond-Smith et al., 2010; Dutton, 2011; Mitchell, 2012; National Social Care Category Strategy for local government, 2015; and Stelling, (2015). These various definitions, although, provides an insight as to the contextual purpose of the use of CM, it also underpins the reasons and implications of its usage in private and public sector.

2.2.2.2 Assumptions and objectives pursued using Category Management between private and public sector organization

Following the numerous ways of defining the concept of category management, all definitions have areas of both similarity and difference when we talk in terms of the private business sector (represented by retailing) and of the public sector (represented by local government and the National Health Service). The similarities and differences have implications for the sectors in terms of the pursued objectives, basic assumptions and data-driven characteristics of the concept. The CM assumptions are inherent in the objectives. The private sector pursues the idea of using CM for managing products and customers' needs but with a variation around customer choice and managing clusters of products to effectively create profit, as an essential component in the delivery of a required product to the customer (Goic et al., 2013). Whereas, in the public sector such as LGA, the focus is on providing value-added services through the management of cost and quality of goods, works and service because procurement in LGA are complex and person-led rather than service-led (Blatterbery et al., 1995). Differences in CM are based on consumers making purchasing decisions and addressing risks in the private sector (CIPS South

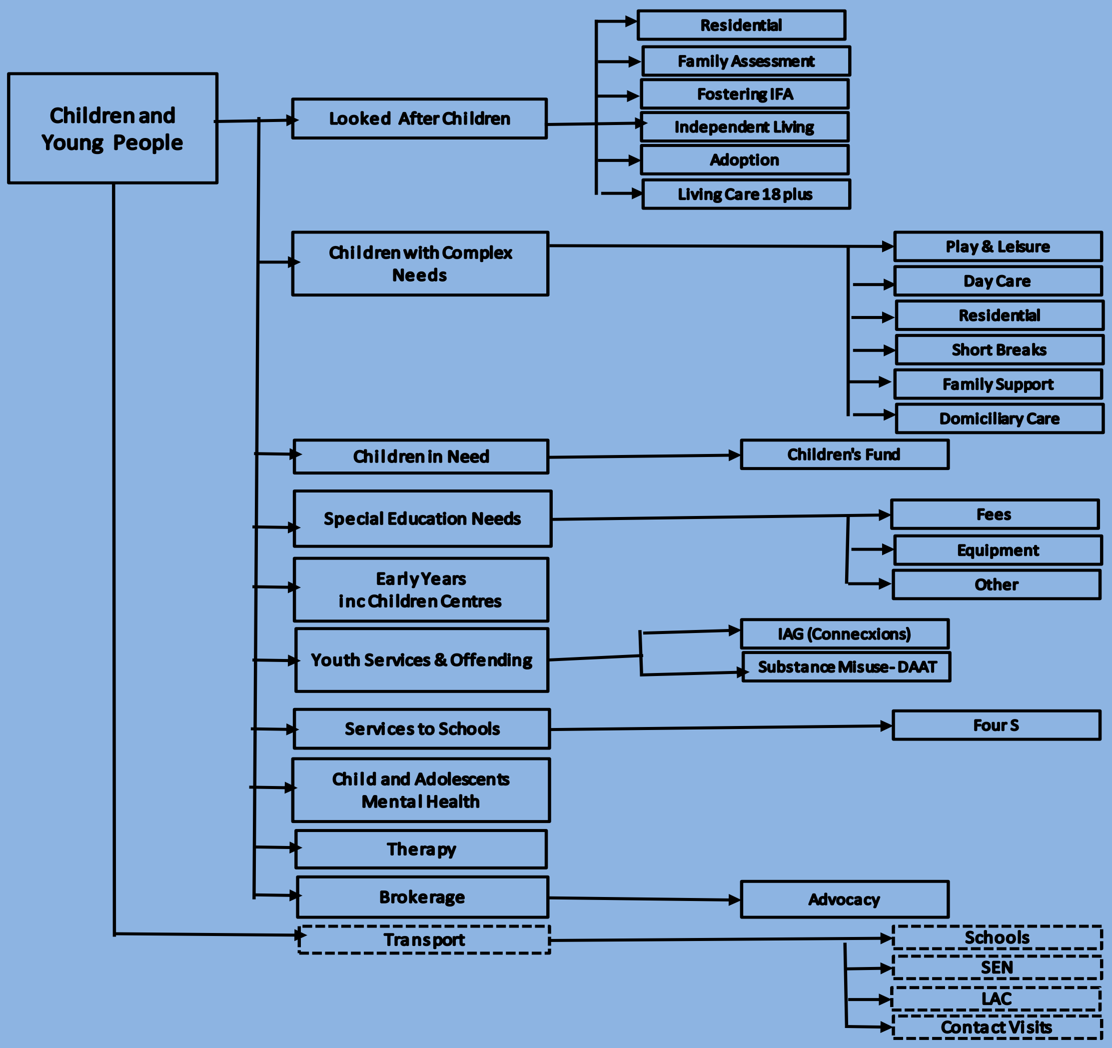
Africa, 2011; Dussert, 1998), whilst in the public sector, CM assumptions are centred around the benefits of better outcomes, expected savings and efficiency (Richard-Smith et al., 2010; National Social Care Category Strategy for local government 2015). The implications for the private sector are said to be about capability development, the structure and organisation of procurement processes, people learning skills, and technology. In the public sector, the implications include focusing on greater collaboration and communication with partners and stakeholders, reducing staff scepticism about the introduction of commercial business tools such as CM, and the need to improve measurable performance.

2.2.2.3 Issues about how Category Management processes works and their implications

According to extant literature, the way in which category management processes work was first developed by Neilsen (1992) as a five stage model and later extended by The Partnering Group (Pradhan, 2016), to an eight stage approach. However, since its inception, there have been numerous variations in the usage of each staged model and adaptation has taken place dependent on relevance, including the strategic importance of the product.

The scope of category management is said to be limited by resource level because each category requires individual strategy (Richmond-Smith, 2010; Dutton, 2011). Category management steps and associated activities for a local government organisation, and its implications, are shown in Figure 2 and Tables 5, 6 and 7 below:

Figure 2: Classification of Procurement for The Children and Young People's Category Management



Source: Adapted from Richmond-Smith et al (2010)

As can be seen in Figure 2 above, the classification of procurement for the children and young people category shows complexity at each process level, which not only relies on the individual practitioners' capabilities for example their competency. This implication is particularly important for the provision of services in local government because CM does not provide a method for identifying and organising service provision within the LGA.

Table 5: Category Management Process Steps for Children and Young People and Families services as an Exemplar in Local Government

Category Management Process Stages and Activities	Key Tasks
INITIATE (Stage 1): Agree category for action and prepare and engage	* Identify the need for change and project; * Identify priority categories of goods and services for category management and current status; * Review existing plans and contracts; * Conduct spend analysis; * Identify stakeholders; * Establish team; * Define project scope and identify business case; * Develop communication plan; and * Ensure governance arrangements are in place
INITIATE (Stage 2): Assess needs and impact	* Engage stakeholders; * Confirm importance; * Conduct porfolio analysis; * Identify opportunities; * Identify stakeholder needs; and * Document impact and risks.
ANALYSE (Stage 3): Analyse internal information	* Develop specification; * Identify internal best practice; * Assess future requirements; * Review current supplier performance; * Analyse sourcing and price history; and * Determine authority level.
ANALYSE (Stage 4): Analyse external information	* Understand market dynamics; * Identify external best practice; * Establish pre-qualification criteria; * Determine potential supplier; * Identify Black Economy Empowerment (BEE) suppliers; and * Identify and analyse risk.

Source: Adapted from CIPS South Africa Conference (2011) and Richmond-Smith (2010)

Table 6: Category Management Process Steps for Children and Young People and Families services as an Exemplar in Local Government

Category Management Process Stages and Activities	Key Tasks
ANALYSE (Stage 5): Evaluate and develop approach:	* Analyse and interpret information; * Develop cost analysis; * Define award criteria; * Generate and evaluate optioins; * Develop source plan; * Submit Balance Score Card (BSC) for approval; and * Obtain mandate to test market.
SOURCE (Stage 6): Evaluate supplier base	* Create and issue 'Request for X' (RFx); * Manage RFx process; * Collate and analyse resources; * Establish 'Total Cost of Ownership' (TCO); * Prepare recommendation to award; * Submit to BEC (Bid Evaluation Commitee); and * Obtain mandate to negotiate.
CONTRACT (Stage 7): Negotiate	* Develop negotiation plan; * Negotiate; * Evaluate suppliers; * Recommend suppliers; * Submit to BAC (Bids Awards Committee); and * Obtain mandate to contract.
CONTRACT (Stage 8): Contract	* Develop contract T &C's (Terms and Conditons); * Develop transition plan; and * Finalise contract
IMPLEMENT (Stage 9): Plan & Implement	* Develop KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) / SLA (Service Level Agreement); * Finalise implementation plan; * Implement plan; * Transition new suppliers or contract; and * Capture knowledge..
MANAGE (Stage 10): Manage and Review performance	* Review contract performance measure; * Review supplier performance measures; * Process contract updates; * Hold supplier reviews; * Measure a report performance; and * Close-out contract.

Source: Adapted from CIPS South Africa Conference (2011) and Richmond-Smith (2010)

Tables 5 and 6 above describe the various structural steps required in CM. Although these stages will generally apply to any CM exercises, some of the steps and tools adopted will differ depending on a range of factors including the strategic approaches required and context of the work being undertaken. The reason for the variation in strategy is that demand, supply and the market are unknown and uncertain, therefore each category will require individual strategy and strategies as there is no one-size-fits-all philosophy. The implications for the public sector including local government organisations may vary considerably and be dependent on the appetite for savings, as the implementation of CM is limited by resource level. In addition, the process steps demonstrate the complexity and the degree of dynamism inherent within the processes, which could prove challenging to individual capabilities and inevitably the required competency level. For example, in stage one of the CM processes, the practitioner needs to have the ability to understand that there are many drivers for changing the approach to acquiring and delivering goods and services when using CM as a tool. In stage two, the practitioner needs the ability to identify that the key to success in CM depends on the convergence of all individual skills into a team effort, in order to manage and understand the market. In stages three, four and five, the ability to undertake data and information collection and analysis requires an assessment and consultation with stakeholders. In stages six and seven, the practitioners require the ability to develop category strategies and relevant aspects of the service provision. In stage eight, the practitioner needs the ability to track progression against performance targets. In stage nine, the practitioner needs to be able to implement category strategy, action plan and collaborate across functions within the organization. In stage ten, the practitioner requires the ability to be able to match progression in performance to the agreed category strategy. Therefore, in order to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the strategic tool, a balance has to be reached which explores and exploits individual internalised capabilities and makes sure the tool is applied in a way that is situational rather than just procedural.

Table 7: Difference between Category Management and Strategic Sourcing:
Category Management more strategic and holistic than strategic sourcing

Differencial Factors	STRATEGIC SOURCING	CATEGORY MANAGEMENT
* Goal	* Reduce purchased costs for a given commodity, most often by selecting lower-cost suppliers through demand aggregation competitive bidding and negotiations	* Maximize realized category value to the organization, including total cost of ownership (CO), risk, operational performance, innovation, etc.
* Frequency	* Periodic and project-based. Triggered over one or more years in the course of managing a commodity.	* Ongoing, day-to-day process. Triggers project-based activities and other operational improvements as needed.
* Approach	* Conducted via an n-step sourcing methodology culminating in transtion to a new supplier contract.	* Develops a category strategy and applies appropriate, value levers and supporting techniques / tools as needed to meet value objectives (e.g. strategic sourcing, SRM, Value engineering, process reengineering, demand and compliance management).
* Results	* Reduced contract pricing translation to actual realized savings hitting the bottom line.	* Category value is targetted, including validated saving and broader value measurement.
* Scope	* Sourceable spend	* Natural category
* Level of Focus	* Project	* Portfolio
* Value Creation Focus	* Competition in the market	* Optimal business value
* Value Measurement	* Cost savings	* Portofolio cost savings spend under measurement contribution to growth
* Planning Horizon	* Contract length usually 1-2 years	* 3 - 5 years
* Sucess	* Procurement and stakeholder are project partners	* Stakeholders own vision
* Process	* Execution	* Planning

Source: Adapted from Mitchell (2012)

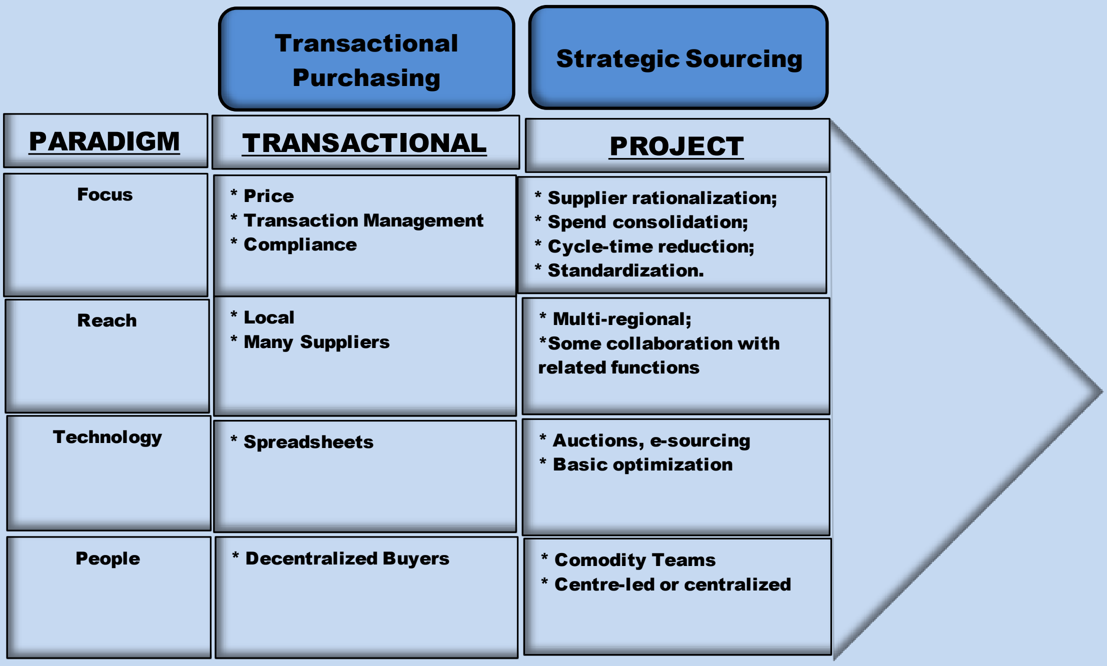
Category management and strategic sourcing processes are processes that are intertwined, however it could be detailed that CM is more strategic than SS because CM is a procurement cycle, which continuously manages goods and services in the long term in alignment with organisational objectives. On the other hand, SS provides an impetus for managing each category according to organisational strategic objectives and therefore starts at the category planning and strategy stage, executing source to contract, supplier management and procure-to-pay. Although the two processes start at different points within the overall procurement cycle, they share similarities such as a reduction in purchasing cost, creating savings and also in terms of the management of stakeholders. The differences between the two processes are mainly temporary in nature. The implications to the application of the tools, resides with individual practitioners acquiring the necessary competency through the use of CM and SS processes.

2.2.3 Evolution of strategic sourcing

The evolution of strategic sourcing has provided a fundamental issue on the transformation of procurement, which traditionally is practiced as an administrative function, procuring goods and services as a short-term, reactive process to one that is proactive and strategic in nature as shown in Figure 3 below:

The evolution of SS, have created challenges for organizations on how to obtain benefits associated with effective strategic sourcing. Obtaining the benefits associated with SS processes, is said to be a “fact-based decision-making” (Rafati et al., 2015: 30), as most businesses are challenged with spend analysis and the need to manage vast volumes of internal and external suppliers data due to the “disparate nature of systems, data source, increasingly global supply base and scattered data” (Rafati et al., 2015: 31), which impacts organizations capability to effectively and efficiently manage supplier information.

Figure 3: Strategic Sourcing is evolving



Source: Adapted from Mubarak (2009)

Rafati et al., (2015), view these challenges as residing within two critical competencies, data management and data analytics. For data management Rafati et al., (2015: 33) argued that the competencies resides on both organization and individual domain. For organizational domain, they outlined attributes such as: "data architecture, extraction, transformation, movement, storage, integration and governance". Whereas, for individual domain, Rafati et al., (2015), argued for the ability to analyse data on business queries and apply quantitative techniques to drive strategic sourcing decision making. The question is how is the concept of strategic sourcing defined across organizations and by individuals? This question is explored in the following sections below.

2.2.4 Strategic sourcing concept

According to Rafati et al., (2015: 42) strategic sourcing is said to have “become a critical area of strategic management that is centred on decision-making regarding an organization’s procurement activities”. These activities are said to include “spend analysis; capability sourcing; supplier selection and evaluation; contract management; and relationship management”. Interestingly, several strategic sourcing definitions have been offered in extant literature, with varying perspectives. Two decades ago, SS was expressed as a business process so as to maximize the value of procured goods and services and achieve strategic objectives (Anderson and Katz, 1998; Carr and Smeltzer, 1999; Narasimlam et al., 1999; Sisilian et al., 2000; Talluri et al., 2006; Smeltzer, 2003; Engel, 2004; Johnson, 2005; and Rudzki, 2006). The idea of SS as a business process persisted into the following decades, but with additional perspectives of its expected benefits being shifted to include factors such as optimally sourcing goods (Robinson, 2000) and building collaborative and enhanced supplier understanding, thereby reducing cost and risk (GE Capital, 2013; Savangapani, 2013; Demel et al., 2015; Parnianglong, 2012). Recently, the way SS is defined has moved into areas where it is considered as a methodology associated with techniques and tools for decision-making (Mitchell, 2012), so as to deliver business solutions (Rafati et al., 2015) and as an approach for leveraging purchasing power and optimising the organisational supplier base so as to improve value (Alberton, 2016). Following the various definitions of strategic sourcing offered by the current literature on the topic, what is compelling is the degree of commonality that exists. The emphasis on the integration of business processes with organisational objectives using SS is predominant, and as stated by Besterfield (2003) is a fundamental philosophy. Therefore, in order to achieve such objectives and execute strategic sourcing, there are also three prevailing principles to be adhered to. These three prevailing principles are shown in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Strategic Sourcing principles

Strategic Sourcing Principles	Description of principles
(1) Expenditure Category Strategy Formulation	The Strategic importance is that commodity is determined by whether it has an impact on a company's core business and future competitiveness". Determining the appropriate arrangement and procurement options.
(2) Total supply cost (TSC)	Described as a consideration for strategic sourcing concept in that the concept unveils the total cost incurred by the buyer, when purchasing materials and services by way of assessing all costs, both direct and indirect, involved the item over the product life. Why? Gives more detailed information to make decisions on suppliers and purchasing so as to be able to determine the most cost-effective choice..
(3) Negotiating Philosophy	Is described as relying on the premise that the successful implementation of strategic sourcing relies largely on the ability to undertake fact-based negotiations, using structured analytical framework such as TSC approach for selecting suppliers, and team based, executive, experienced in a range of business functions. The philosophy is said to be competely different from traditional process.

Source: Adapted from Parniangtong (2016)

Parniangtong (2016: 4) made the point that under traditional procurement methods, “managers disregarded the negotiation and buying skills of purchasers in favour of so-called expertise in a product function” but then went on to say that on the contrary, strategic sourcing recognises "that the skills of purchasing professionals are necessary not only for purchasing but also for decisions in other areas such as:

product design, direction of research and development and technology uptake". Since all of these functions have purchasing implications and an impact on the overall profitability of the company, SS is said to differentiate between items that are of the highest priority to the company, and those that command the most time. This consequently means that there is a need for a structured and organised approach to SS that can result in cost savings and benefits to companies (Parniangtong, 2016: 7). SS excellence is defined as a "value chain in a set of processes through which SS decisions are made and value is created for the organizations" (Anderson et al., 1998: 2).

Rafati et al., (2015: 37-38) went on to describe the concept of strategic sourcing as consisting of elements such as: "resources, competencies, capability, service, supply chain members, and perceived value", as shown in Table 9 below. This observation by Rafati et al., (2015) clearly demonstrates the level of complexity encountered in SS processes and that there is a need for individual practitioners of SS processes to demonstrate the ability to display all characteristics of competency within all situations.

Table 9: Description of Elements of Strategic Sourcing concepts

Elements of Strategic Sourcing	Descriptions of Elements of Strategic Sourcing Concepts
(1) Resources	* This is seen as the "firms's assets that require action to make them valuable and beneficial for the firm to sustain competitive advantages. Resources are valuable, if they are rare, inimitable and non-substituable".
(2) Competencies	* This is seen as a "firm's specific strengths that allows a company to gain competitive advantages. For example threshold competencies allows firms to compete in a given market and achieve parity, whereas, distinctive competencies allow the firm to achieve sustainable competeitive advantages".
3) Capability	* This is seen as "a configuration of the firm's resources and competencies that makes the firm able to acheive and sustain competitive advantage. For example: Dynamic capabilities are the firm's capacities and abilities to reconfigure its resource based internally to achieve the sustainable competitive advantage. Dynamic capability act on operational capabilities, whereas, operational capabilities can be broken into technical, administrative and governance capabilities for producing and setting a defined (and static) set of products and services".
(4) Services	This is seen as "the application of competencies to achieve competitive advantage or survivability. Competitive advantage is said to be the ability to create more economic value than competitors. It is a firm's profitability that is greater than the average profitability for all firms in its industry. Furthermore, a sustained competitive advantage is the ability to maintain above average and superior profitability for a number of years. This sustain competitive advantage is said to be the primary objective of strategic sourcing".
(5) Supply Chain (Members or Stakeholders)	As the focal firm are: "buyers, suppliers, internal customers and external customers and able to create value in the supply network through sourcing relations like supplier-buyer relationship and customer-provider relationship".
(6) Perceived Value	This is defined as the "customer based on their perceptions of the usefulness of the product on offer. Exchange value is realised when the product is sold. Therefore, in strategic sourcing, value is co-create with supplier or provider and services as value proposition to customers when supplier facilitate the value, which when served to customer becomes value-actualization".

Source: Adapted from Rafati et al (2015)

Rafati et al., (2015) assert that variability exists for specific approaches, strategies and best practice. This variability, according to the authors, is minimised by the availability of a structured approach to strategic sourcing process using a generic 7-step approach comprising of: profile category; developing sourcing strategy, identifying suppliers; evaluating suppliers; negotiating with suppliers; transition suppliers; and manage suppliers, as displayed in Figure 4 below:

Figure 4: A Generic 7 - Step Strategic Sourcing process key Objectives, Activities, and Deliverables

	1 Profile Category	2 Develop Sourcing Strategy	3 Identify Suppliers	4 Evaluate Suppliers	5 Negotiate with Suppliers	6 Transition Suppliers	7 Manage Suppliers
Key Deliverables	*Team Members and Stakeholders List *Work Plan *Demand Profile *Supply Profile *Draft Cost Model *SWOT Analysis *Initial Supplier List	*Sourcing Strategy *Risk Assessment	*Supplier Assessment Matrix *Prerequisite Supplier Documentation *Supplier Assessment Package *Evaluation Supplier List	*Supplier Evalution Matrix *Supplier Evaluation Package *Update Cost Model *Sourcing Plan *Stakeholder Assessment checklist	*Draft Tenets of Agreements (TOA) *Negotiation Plan *Finalized TOA *Drafty Transition Plan *Business Award Plan *Stakeholder Approval Checklist *Signed Supplier Contracts	*Supplier Score Cards *Finalized Transition Plan *Key Learning Report	*Supplier Management Plan
Key Objectives	*Understand internal spend and external supply market	*Evaluate profiles and develop sourcing strategy	*Establish selection criteria and conduct supplier assessmernt	*Conduct and Evaluate supplier evaluation and finalize sourcing plan	*Develop negotiations plan & select supplier	*Execute supply agreement & supplier transition	*Monitor market and supplier performance
Key Activities	*Structure & Mobilize sourcing team *Profile demand *Profile supply market	*Set sourcing objectives *Develop sourcing strategy *Finalize sourcing strategy and Align Stakeholders	*Prepare supplier assessment *Execute supplier assessment	*Customize and execute supplier evaluation *Finalize sourcing plan	*Plan / Execute Negotiation and select suppliers *Plan supply transition *Award Business	*Develop Scorecards *Execute Transition	*Establish SRM Governance *Manage supplier performance

Source: Adapted from Albertson (2017)

2.2.5 The strategic sourcing (SS) processes

Mitszczak, (2014: 12) argues that, it is at this point of strategic sourcing (SS) that the “understanding of the complexity of SS processes begins” and also the start of the acquisition of the “skill set expected of the procurement professionals”. Mitszczak, (2014: 12) continues to argue that an in-depth knowledge is required throughout the process, “a skill set that gathered through real world experience, advanced education and the zeal for wanting to know about the dynamics within the 7-steps of strategic sourcing processes" as shown in Tables 10 and 11 below.

Table 10: Description of steps in Strategic Sourcing process

Steps in Strategic Sourcing Process	Descriptions of Steps in Strategic Sourcing process
Step 1: Profile Category	This is about understanding the internal and external markets looking at where the organization stands in the value chain, the supplier and the market place and just how important a particular good and service is to the organization. Tools useful for conducting this step are: SWOT analysis.; Micheal Porter's 5-Forces matrix. Spend analysis and Segnmentation analysis This step is critical to determining the best sourcing strategy. Also in this step, where it is essential to group an entire product spend that has similarities into one succinct category in order to determine total spend by way of understanding the needs of the users, stakeholders and or customer with the view to understanding supplier performance. The criticality of this step requires segmentation analysis which allows for the positioning the product in relation to other product purchased.
Step 2: Develop Sourcing Strategy	In this step, you ask the question: How does the product being sourced align with the overall business strategy? It is in this step where a category positioning matrix becomes useful, positioning the product or services to help define the strategy to use..
Step 3: Identify the Supplier	In this step, you identify the supplier base and all potentially viable suppliers and examine the criteria for selecting viable suppliers. This information gathering exercise might be done through an RFI (Request for Information), where the capabilities of variety of suppliers are identified, which may lead to a shortlist of candidates with the possibilities of participation in an RFP (Request for Proposal) excercise.
Step 4: Evaluate Suppliers	In this step, the purpose is to identify how to execute strategy by using an RFP, after evaluating thoroughly the proposals submitted by suppliers, prioritizing weightings for specifics around specifications, usage, pricing and more, which will lead to negotiations and award.

Source: Adapted from Miszczak (2014)

Table 11: Description of steps in Strategic Sourcing process

Steps in Strategic Sourcing Process	Descriptions of Steps in Strategic Sourcing process
Step 5: Negotiate with Suppliers	In this step, the negotiation and selection of suppliers commences. So therefore, it is crucial to have developed a negotiating strategy and to put in place an effective team with varying expertise in order to meet the demands of a successful negotiation session.
Step 6: Transition Suppliers	It is in this step, that one deals with transitional issues relating to the decision to work with a new supplier and having to discountinue an old one. Therefore, certain factors have to be considered such as: * Identifying any transition issues (such as providing user details to the new supplier; * Considering organizational implications and any required changes; * Creating new processes and procedures if necessary * Creating a transition implementation plan, and * Communicating the changes to users.
Step 7: Manage Suppliers	This step in the strategic sourcing process recognises that agreement between procurer and supplier is in place, therefore, the need to continue evaluating the relationship over the contractual term, by putting in place some contractual performance metrics and regular meetings. In addition to start to develop future arrangements by planning ahead.

Source: Adapted from Miszczak (2014)

The above implies that the various definitions of SS offered in the extant literature, the adherence to the principles and the complexity of the process stages all have implications for the competency and competencies of both individuals and organization.

2.2.6 Conclusion

The systematic literature review of category management and strategic sourcing processes has revealed the complexity of the processes. This is demonstrated by the numerous definitions and processing steps offered by current literature covering the topics. These various definitions seem to be dependent on the organisational environment. However, an apparent realisation from this review is the existence of structured steps for dealing with the processes, which provides users of CM and SS processes the necessary focus and consistent approach needed for performing the process and realising the organisation's objectives. Also, this review gave an insight which enabled the researcher to understand CM day-to-day processes as an ongoing practice for the purpose of maximising realized category value for organization. In order to realize the category value for organization in CM processes, the strategic tool takes into account the idea of evaluating the full cycle of a contract or supplier life cycle (intra-organisation); the holistic evaluation of the life cycle of a value-chain which consumes the goods and services (inter-organisation) and also the organisational business objectives. Conversely, in SS processes, the concept evolved from an activity based on transactional purchasing to a project-based, decision-making activity, whose ultimate goal as a tool is to reduce the purchasing cost by using a variety of information from aggregated demands, a rationalisation of suppliers and also commodity selection. This consequently creates considerable challenges for organisations and individual professionals alike, thereby, demanding the need to express competency and competencies in order to achieve the required performance. Therefore, this intuition brings about the need to examine the sort of competency and competencies required in CM and SS processes, this will be examined in the following section.

2.3 Dimension Two: Concepts of competency and competencies

2.3.1 Introduction

The systematic literature review for understanding competency in this section sets out to explain the important aspects of the concepts of competency for the understanding of the topic. The purpose is to give a brief historic development of competency and competencies, to examine the definition and meaning of competency, and how the issues related to competency are understood within existing literature.

2.3.2 Brief historic development of competency approach

According to Athey et al., (1999); Kulkarni et al., (2016); Woodruff (1993); Hoffmann (1999); Moore et al., (2002); Boyatzis (2008) and Chouhan et al., (2014), the origin of the competency approach was originally initiated by McCelland (1973) as an alternative to the trait and competence intelligence approach to measuring and predicting human performance. Boyatzis' (1982) publication, according to Strebler et al., (1997), is said to have initiated the wide-spread use of the term 'competency'.

2.3.3 The meaning of the term competency

According to Chouhan et al., (2014: 15), competency has its origin in the Latin word “competentia”, which means “is authorized to judge” as well as “has the right to speak” (Caupin et al., 2006: 9). It is also stated by Cooper (2000) and Dalton (1997) that competency is lacking a uniform definition, which in turn leads to misunderstanding and confusion. Various definitions of competency have been proposed in extant literature.

2.3.3.1 The definitions of the term competency

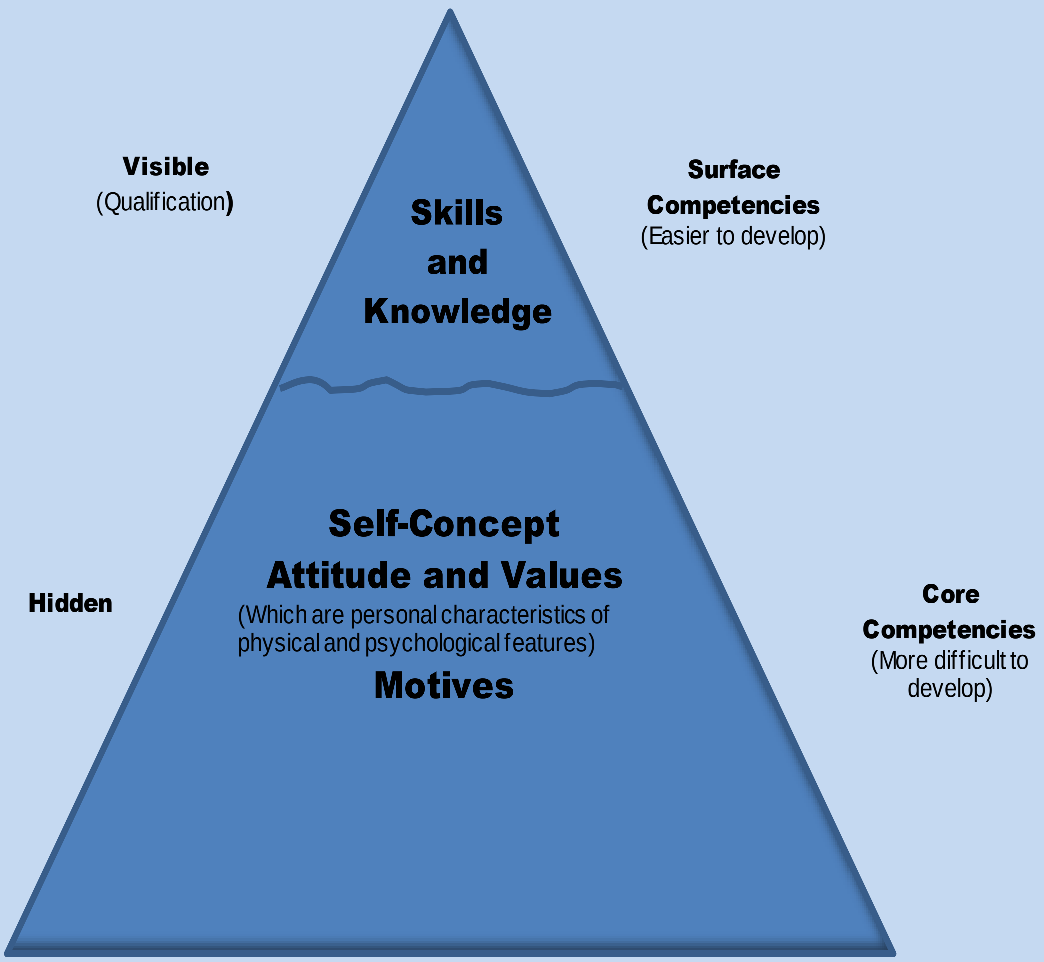
According to Chouhan et al., (2014), the definition of competency is said to be one of the most fraught tasks in business research with little agreement among researchers. For example, Hornby and Thomas (1989: 53) defined competency as the "ability to perform effectively the functions associated with management in a work situation" and Spencer and Spencer (1993: 9) is said to define competency as "skills and abilities", which are "things you can do" and "acquired through work experience, life experience and study or training"; Over the past three decades, the variability's of the definitions of competency in extant literature are more around the conceptualization of the output, which resides between factors such as: superior, significant and average performance (Kemp, 1980; Boyatzis, 1982; 2007; Hoggs, 1989; Dubios, 1988; Spencer and spencer, 1990; and Batram et al., 2002). Whereas, when compared to the conceptualization of the input, there is a degree of commonality and consistencies around underlying characteristics of factors such as:: knowledge, skills, ability, mind-set, belief, values, attitudes, and qualities, which are all said to be forms of competency.

2.3.4 Forms of competency characteristics

Competency approaches have expanded from a traditional focus on knowledge and skills alone, to include characteristics such as self-concepts and values, traits and motives (Tucker and Cofsky, 1994). Furthermore, it is argued by Spencer et al., (1993) that knowledge, skills and competencies are by nature visible and therefore easy to develop because they may be somewhat technical, and as all are required within employment, training can be tailored in the most cost-effective way in order to secure and develop the abilities of employees.

By the same token, attributes such as self-concepts, traits and motives are behavioural competencies that drive an individual's performance and influence the orientation and ways in which individuals use their skills and knowledge. Spencer et al., (1993: 11) describe these behavioural competencies as “hidden” competencies. This conceptualisation is depicted as the “Iceberg Model” as shown in Figure 5 below:

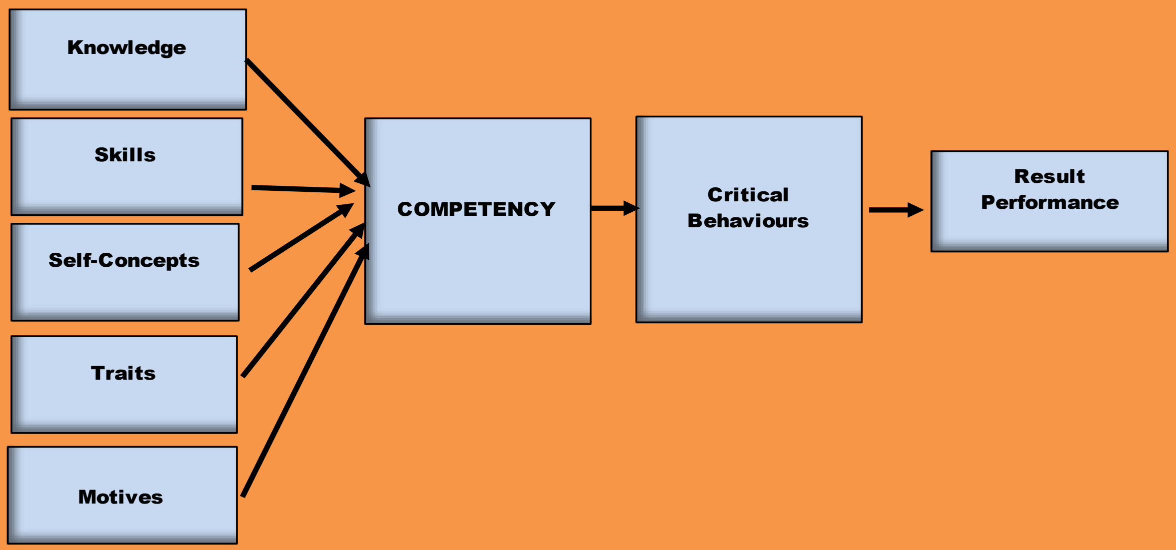
Figure 5: The Iceberg Model of Competency



Source: Adapted from Spencer and Spencer (1993: 11)

Turker et al., (1994: 35) also contend that motives and traits as competency characteristics may be termed as "initiators of what people do on the job without close supervision". They represent the link between the concept of competency characteristics, critical behaviour and performance, as shown in Figure 6 below:

Figure 6: Concept of Competency



Source: Adapted from Chouham et al., (2014)

2.3.5 Reason for the differences in perspectives about the definition of competency and the implications for different approaches to the term 'competency'

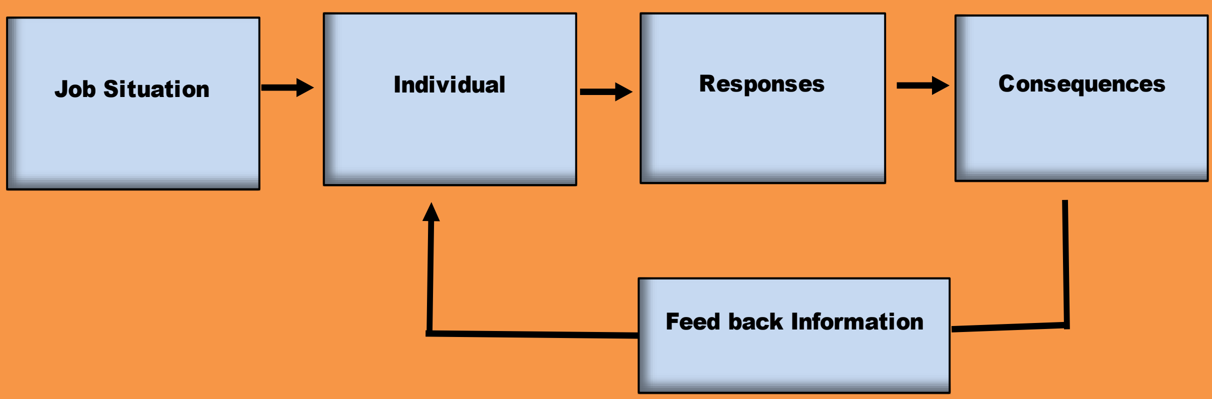
Hoffmann (1999: 277) suggested that there are three main positions taken by researchers towards the definition of the term competency. These are either:

- "observable performance" by Boam and Sparrow (1992); Bowden and Masters (1993);
- "the standard or quality of the outcome of person's performance" (Rutherford, 1995; Hager et al., 1994); or
- "the underlying attributes of a person" (Boyatzis , 1982; Sternberg and Kolligian, 1990).

Hoffmann (1999: 277), suggested that the "different definitions of the term competency appear to come from the different starting points used to begin the design of learning". However, the implications for these various positions and focuses of the definition of the term competency are the "rationale for using the competency approach", which will have an impact when "determining the starting point taken towards the definition" (Hoffmann, 1999: 277).

Hoffmann (1999: 277) expanded the meaning of competency by using Rummler's Model (1992) as stated in Rothwell et al., (1992) and Talaq et al., (2004), as shown in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: A Situation-Specific Model of Human Performance



Source: Adapted from Hoffman (1999: 277)

Hoffmann (1999:277) stated that the meaning of the term 'Competency' may shift", and described each of the elements as shown in Table 12 below.

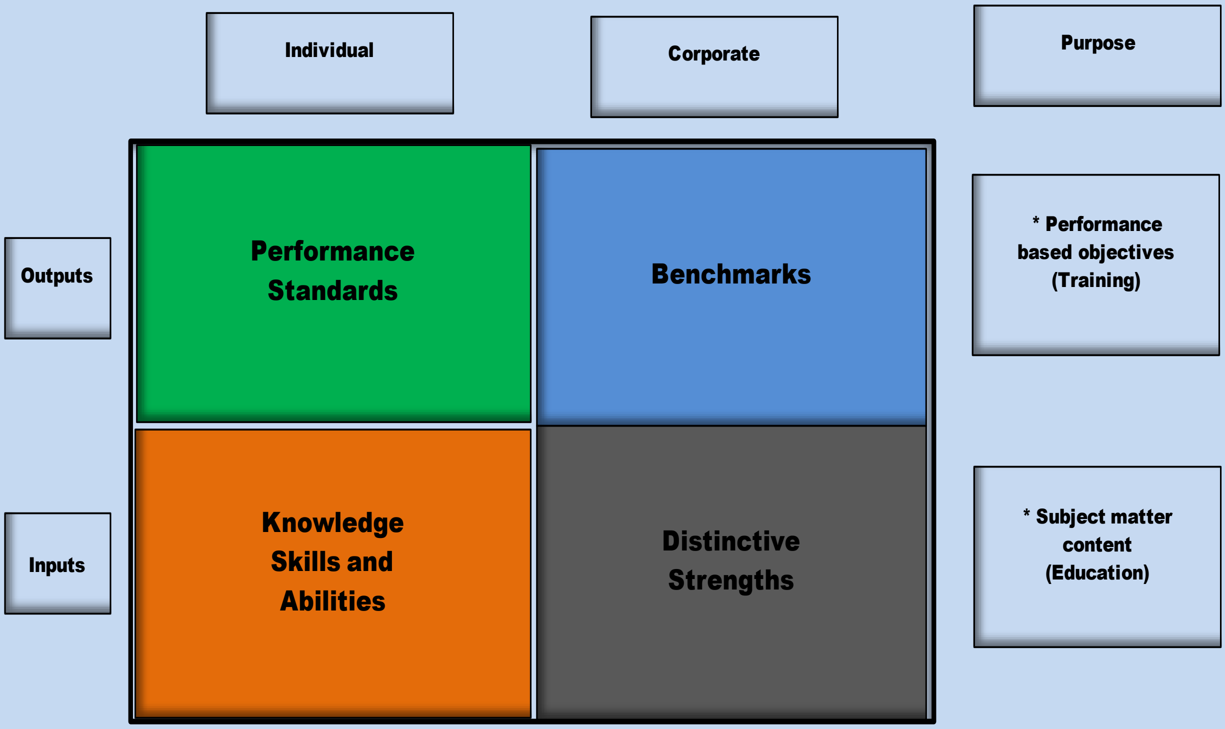
Table 12: Description of Situation-Specific Model for Human Performance

* "The job situation defines when a desired performance or action is required. A competency may be to be able to determine when to act and when not to act, depending on the circumstances"
* "The individual needs underlying attributes such as knowledge, skills, abilities in order to respond to the situation";
* "The response or action, is an observable demonstration by the individual that they have recognised the situation appropriately and have the necessary underlying attributes to deliver the required action;
* "The consequences, or outcomes are the standards desired; and
* "The feedback information the individual receives from the achievement or failure to achieve, guides the future action

Source: Adapted from Hoffman (1999)

In addition, Hoffmann (1999) also went on to explain the typologies of competency. These typologies of meaning and the purpose of the term 'competency' is depicted in Figure 8 below. This figure demonstrates the importance of various aspects of competency when viewed from individual and corporate perspectives. For example, an individual output is measured by performance and the performance is dependent on the individual's input. This is characterised by the internalised capabilities of the individual such as knowledge, skills, and abilities, otherwise the performance could not be achieved. Whereas, on the other hand, when competency is viewed from corporate perspectives, the input is the distinctive competencies such as the ability to formulate strategy and strategies and the competency is benchmarked for the output performance.

Figure 8: Typology of Meaning and Purpose of the term "Competency"



Source: Adapted from Hoffmann (1999: 283)

Yuvaraj (2011: 6) compared competency to competence, as detailed in Table 13 below. In this context, it is necessary to understand the difference between competence and competency because the concepts reside within two different domains and should be used appropriately. Whilst competence characterises the end result, competency on the other hand characterises what behaviours underpin the achievement of that end result.

Table 13: Differences between Competence and Competency

COMPETENCE	COMPETENCY
* Based on the results;	* Based on individual behaviour;
* Describes the features of job;	* Describes the features of the person;
* Consists of the various skills and knowledge required to perform a job;	* Consists mainly of fundamental characteristics of a person, which results in effective and or superior performance of a job;
*Are not transferable since each skill is more specific to perform the job;	* Are transferable from one person to another;
*Measured by performance on the job efficiency;	* Measured in terms of behaviour / attitude;
* Are specifically process orientated.	* Are typically result orientated.

Source: Adapted from Yuvaraj (2011:6)

However, according to Athey (1999), this may include attributes as shown in Table 14 below, demonstrating further the complexity of the concept of competency.

Table 14: What competency may Include

* "Knowledge or skills associated with current job performance";
* "Emerging knowledge or skills required for future success";
* "Intellectual or behavioural best practice of high performing people or team";
* "Process capabilities that enhances organisational or human performance"; and
* "New ways of thinking or behaving that provide distinctive competitive advantage".

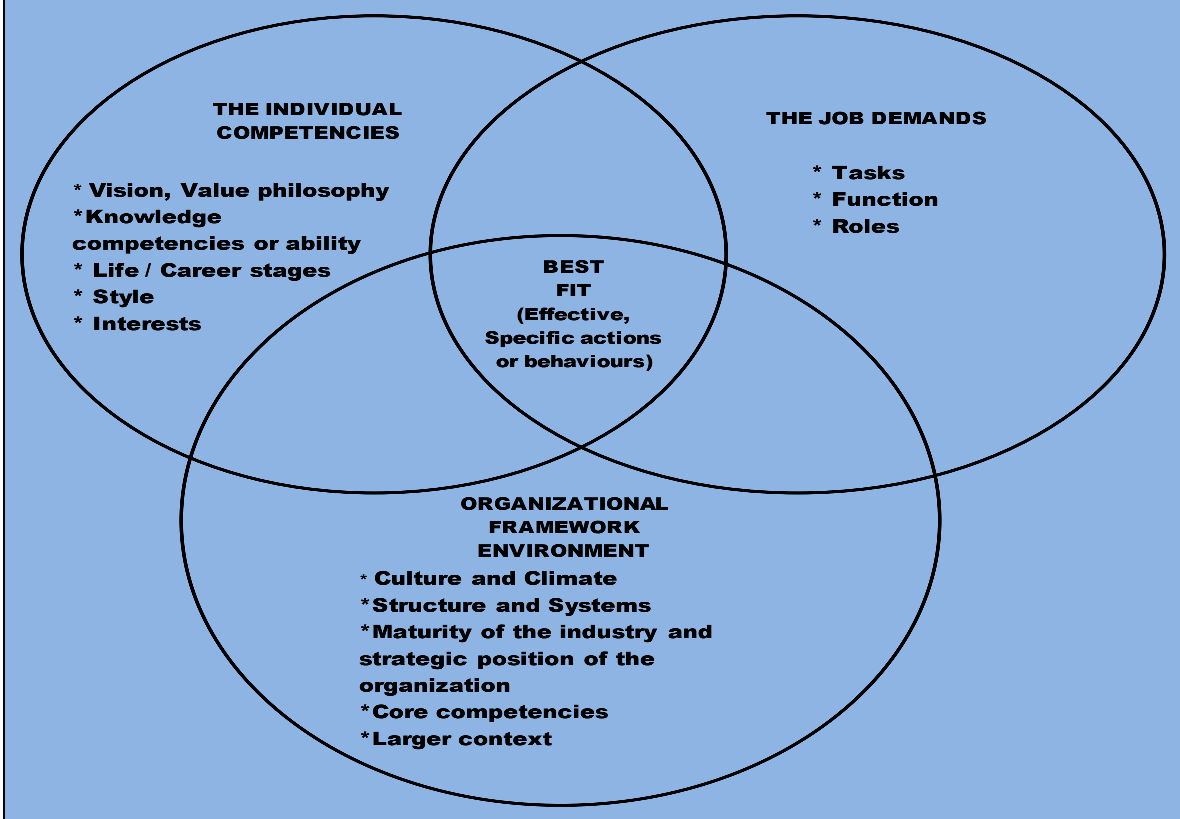
Source: Adapted from Athey (1999)

The curiosity of the researcher goes further as to examine how other researchers of competency in extant literature explains the concept of competency.

2.3.6 Explaining the concept of competency using a theory of performance

This explanation commences with the definition of competency and the example provided by Boyatzis (2007: 7), in relation to a theory of performance. The author asserts that “a theory of performance is the basis for the concepts of competency”. He explains that by “using a basic contingency theory approach” as shown in Figure 9 below, “maximum performance is believed to occur when the person/(s) capability or talent is consistent with the needs of the job demands and the organizational environment”:

Figure 9: The use of the theory of action and job performance: Best fit (Maximum Performance, Stimulation and Commitment) = Area of maximum overlap or integration to depict the basis of the concept of competency



Source: Adapted from Boyatzis (2008: 7)

Boyatzis (2007: 7) also suggested that “research published over the past thirty years or so shows that outstanding leaders, managers, advanced professionals and people in key jobs, appear to acquire three clusters of behavioural habits as threshold abilities and three clusters of competencies as distinguishing outstanding performance". The threshold clusters of competencies are as shown in Table 15 below:

Table 15: Description of Threshold clusters of Competencies

* "Expertise and experience is a threshold level of competency;
* "Knowledge (i.e. declarative, procedural, functional and meta-cognitive is a threshold competency); and
* "An assortment of basic cognitive competencies, such as memory and deductive reasoning are threshold competencies

Source: Adapted from Boyatzis (2008: 7)

Boyatzis (2007: 7) also explained the three clusters of competencies which differentiate outstanding and average performance, as shown in Table 16 below::

Table 16: Clusters of Competencies Differentiating Outstanding from Average Performers

* "Cognitive competencies, which are things "such as systems thinking and pattern recognition";
* "Emotional intelligence competencies, including self-awareness and emotional self-control"; and
* "Social intelligence competencies, including social awareness and relationship

Source: Adapted from Boyatzis (2008: 7)

Boyatzis (2008: 7-8) also contended that "an integrated concept of emotional, social and cognitive intelligence competencies offers more than just a framework for describing human disposition" and that "it offers a theoretical structure for the organization of personality and linking it to a theory of action and job performance".

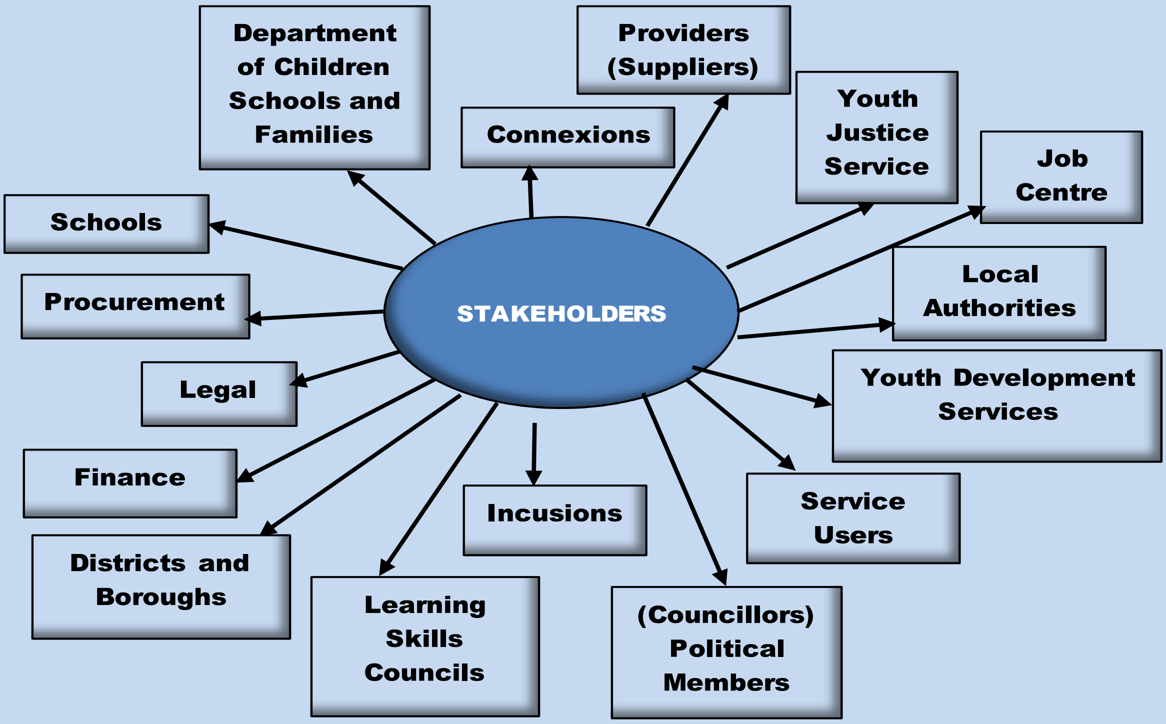
Therefore, this led Boyatzis (2008: 8) to suggest that "if a competency is an underlying characteristic of the person that leads to or causes effective or superior performance", then the competency could be described as constituting an integrated combination of emotional, social and cognitive factors.

Overall, the concept of competency as demonstrated by Hoffmann (1999), explained by Yuraraj (2011), expatiated by Athey (1999) and demonstrated by the use of theory of performance by Boyatzis (2007), aids the development of an understanding of the concept of competency and how it could be perceived and used by individuals and organisations in differing situations.

2.4 Dimension Three: Local government as a purchasing organization

The development of purchasing and supply management over the past decade has triggered rapid changes in the dynamic business environment. Orumwense (2017: 214) stated that category management and strategic sourcing are said to be the "critical success factors within human capability in a process that uses pooling and aggregation, and (is) centralised, and with a strategic focus for value for money and (an) operational factor that is standardised". In particular, CM and SS are nascent processes within local government procurement organisations. The strategic goal of public procurement is affected by procurement decisions, which are often part of larger understandings involving significant investment (Csaba et al., 2010). Local government authorities (LGA) are major clients of the construction industry for new building projects, refurbishment and maintenance. Boyd (2011) outlined that with such a significant purchasing value, LGAs have to collaborate as stated in the National Procurement Strategy for local government (2018) and aggregate their purchasing so as to achieve reduced costs and a better availability of materials. Key driving features include assessing real savings, moving to a standardisation of specification, effective aggregation and better relationships with suppliers, of which there are multitudes of stakeholders. This is displayed in Figure 10 below:

Figure 10: Exemplar Primary Stakeholders for Children, Young People and Families Services in English Local Government



Source: Adapted from Richard-Smith et al., (2010)

Isinopoulos et al., (2012) and Carpineti et al., (2006), stated that there are significant differences in the application of the financial threshold according to EU legislation, generally known as the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) thresholds, which means approaches to CM and SS processes are different within the sector. These differences are said to impact the ways LGAs uses CM and SS processes to collaborates and improve better service delivery (Ambe et al., 2011 and Hawkins et al., 2014), in a supplier market with differing characteristics as shown in Table 17 below.

Table 17: What Charcterises current Local Government Supplier's Market's

WHATE CHARACTERISES LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPLIER'S MARKET	DESCRIPTIONS OF CHARACTERISTICS
(1) A wide range of statutory and discretionary services	This ranges from delivering Adult Social Care and Public Health to Highways, roads and transport.
(2) A drive to competition and efficiency	From 1990's Best Value to Comprehensive performance assessments; the Gersham Review 2.5% p.a. efficiency target for Council's up to 2011; Localism Act (2011; Development of more joint working; New model for service delivery and boosting the market performance.
(3) A mixed picture of market place	98% of Social housing management is delivered by the public sector or by an arm's length body. The even split of waste management between public and private sector management.
(4) A broad range of Public-Private partnership models	From straight forward contracts to frameworks, joint ventures, private financing, authorities having significant choices of commercial models open to them.
(5) More opportunities for local and SME providers	A clear shift to encourage smaller firms to bid for government contracts, boosting market diversity; building SME participation beyond simply contracting.
(6) A trend away from longer contracts	Benefits of shorter contracts are: Easier to manage and provides short term solution. Consequences are: suppliers have reduced incentive to invest in innovation; not always appropriate and suppliers struggle to support the sort of transformative changes many public services require.

Source: Adapted from Cherry et al., (2012)

Boyne (2002) stated that dimensions of the organisational performance of LGAs include factors such as: output; quality, quantity, efficiency, service outcomes, responsiveness and democratic outcomes, and that the critical weakness that remains is the absence of indicators that link spending with service outcomes, and that such indicators are essential if judgements about value for money and best value are to be made. The researcher would argue that these are factors which make purchasing organisation complex, and has implications for the use of business tools and the practice of CM and SS processes, requiring a mature competency and competencies both at individual and organisational level. Kloot (2000) stated that the approach to performance improvement in LGAs has two common themes driving the financial performance: explicit accountability to the community and implicit managerial accountability. Other factors affecting local government as a purchasing organisation include the issue of designing the public procurement strategy, a critical step in CM and SS processes. Patrucco et al., (2017), observed that designing public procurement strategy in LGAs "faces competing priorities, such as: cost efficiency, legal conformity, advancement of environmental protection and the promotion of innovation". However, Patrucco et al., (2017: 1), concluded that the challenge is about the organisation of more mature competencies and skills, especially for the implementation of CM and SS processes. Baier et al., (2008), mentioned that the key facet in LGA purchasing organization is the issue of strategic alignment, which provides a link between corporate strategy, with characteristics such as operational excellence, purchasing strategy and: service cost, quality, and innovation. The researcher will argue that the major issue with this alignment is the reconciliation and balancing of each element of the characteristics in practice. Therefore, in order to perform this alignment successfully in practice, there is a need to explore and exploit what repertoire of competency and competencies individual practitioners need for the practice of CM and SS processes and for the interpretation and translation of the alignment.

McKevitt (2014) contend that national policy and the role of procurement exerts a mixed effect on buyers and SMEs (small-medium enterprises), even though both public and private sector procurement organisations are designed to acquire goods and services for the communities and customers that they serve. Both similarities and differences exist between the two sectors, as shown in Table 18 below:

Table 18: Similarities and Differences between Public and Private Sector Procurement
(Both public and private sector procurement organizations are designed to acquire goods and services)

Differences Factor	Public Sector Procurement	Private Sector Procurement
Similarities: (1) Design	Public sectors are designed to enquire for goods and services.	Private sector are designed to enquire for goods and services
Differences: (1) Focus of Purpose (2) Activities	* Primarily on a social benefit. * For supporting government operations; * To provide public service.	* Primarily profit centric. * For supporting the principal business objectives.
(3) Source of Funding	*From taxes, grants and loans obtained by the government on behalf of the Country.	* Funded by owners or shareholders of the Company.
(4) Governing Rules	* Public procurement legal and institutional framework (procurement rules); * Strict adherence to public procurement framework by practitioners.	* Complies primarily with contractor commercial law with respect to formation of contracts, method, governed by company policy (not necessary dictated by law but by the objectives of the company through internal policies of the company.
(5) With respect to oversight .	* Open to public scrutiny, public procurement are accountable for their actions and must manage procurement in accordance with objectives, principles and procedures as defined in the public procurement rules.	* Private sector procurement process is mostly closed to public scrutiny but subject to shareholders review. .

Source: Adapted from Lynch (2013)

As per Table 18 above, the only similarities between public and private sector organisations are on the issue of which items to acquire. But beyond that, the factors of differentiation are about the nature of the entity itself and of bottom-lines. For the public sector, the bottom-line is driven by sociology, taxation, strict frameworks, regulatory governance and public scrutiny. Whereas in the private sector, the bottom-line is driven by economic factors, governed by corporate policy, company law and customer behaviour. The implications for both sectors are that individual competencies and competency will also be influenced due to the nature of the entity itself

For example, this is clearly demonstrated when the issue of appetite to risk is observed. Public sectors are principally risk averse because of the issue of public scrutiny, whilst private sectors are risk-takers due to the issue of reliant on private investment (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2019).

According to Murray (1999, 2000, 2001a, b, and 2007), local government practice is said to be strategically aligned with strategic social-economic goals, which are implemented through policy documents such as: The National Procurement Strategy for Local Government (2018) or National Social Care Category Strategy for local government (2015)

2.5 Empirical Evidence

2.5.1 Elements of competency/competencies and implications for CM and SS processes

CM and SS are disciplines within the purchasing and supply management (PSM) field. The processes contain several steps and each step entails a process in its own right. Therefore, in order to ensure consistency, the researcher adopts the description of the terms "competency (singular) and competencies (plural) required in PSM" as stated by Bals et al., (2019: 2). The researcher acknowledges that in the PSM literature, "a robust trajectory of empirical research on the skills, competencies and knowledge required in PSM" (Bals et al., 2019: 1) exists. The researcher also acknowledges that in PSM literature there has been a development over the past decade in terms of: "sourcing innovation; supplier management disruption; ensuring sustainability in supply network; digitalisation of workplace are challenges to previous assumptions about what competencies are required from PSM professionals" (Bals et al., 2019: 1). There is also the issue of conceptual ambiguity around the terminology of skills, competencies, knowledge and the relationships between them. A further issue is that of competency clusters, in which competencies are granulated differently by researchers of competency modelling, dependent on the organisational context or purpose of the research. For example, according to Bals et al (2019: 2), competencies are clustered conceptually as: "(knowledge, cognitive, and understanding) and occupational (technical and functional knowledge, psychomotor and applied skills)" aspects. In addition, Bals et al., (2019: 2) mentioned the earlier work of Hayes (1979), which describes competencies as encompassing knowledge, motives, traits and skills. With these ongoing issues, the researcher acknowledges that there is a tension in terms of how competency and competencies are perceived by researchers, especially in the field of PSM, which contains varied and complex disciplines such as CM and SS. These ambiguities and inconsistencies have led to limited empirical evidence of elements of competency and competencies addressing aspects and facets of CM and SS, especially in the public sector, where the concepts of CM and SS have recently been adopted as a tool for managing and leveraging organisational spend, when compared to the use of CM and SS as a business tool within the private sector.

2.5.1.1 Elements of competency/competencies and implications for CM and SS processes in private sector context

Elements of competency and competencies in CM and SS processes appear in various aspects and facets of the key elements of CM and SS. For example, Thomas et al., (2013: 96-97) argued that employing a win or lose negotiation strategy may decrease future intentions toward information exchange, communication quality and operational knowledge transfer, which entails bringing together the competency of knowledge and skill between buyers and suppliers

Allott (2017: 11), states that in using sourcing portfolio analysis and power positioning tools in CM and SS processes, helps procurement practitioners understand the “buyer-supplier power position and in Identifying core competencies”. Rafati and Poels (2016: 4-6) argued that “operand resources such as knowledge and skills are usually intangible, dynamic and active resources, and that they act upon other resources to create benefits and. essential component of differentiation and the fundamental source of competitive advantage”. Rafati and Poels (2016: 3) also reveal that the tactical spend and strategic value management approaches, which were put forward by the Kraljic Portfolio Model (2014) and Cox Portfolio Model (2015) are on the whole useful at the “transactional and tactical level of operation”, however needed to be advanced in order to incorporate the strategic level environment, which is more dynamic. In this sense, there is a reliance on skills: business skills, ICT skills, technical skills, organisational skills, technologies (e.g. time) rather than value creation factors such capabilities, competencies and resources. Rhodes et al., (2016) states that motive underpinning outsourcing allow company resources to focus on the relationship between the outsourcing requirements and the supplier customer relationship. Chiang and Kocabasoglu-Hillmer (2012) states that adapting, integrating, and reconfiguring internal and external organizational skills for strategic sourcing and the flexibility to firms supply agility has implications for organizational performance. Su (2013) states that relational competencies generate sustainability when based on an RBV (resource based view) and that it is apparent that the supplier's capability, skills, and technologies can be inimitable and that strategic sourcing significantly impacts buyer-supplier relationships, supplier evaluation, and the sourcing performance of buying companies. Eltantawy et al., (2014) argued that the interest in the strategic value of a firm's skills, knowledge, distinct ideologies or cultural competencies items addressed the perceived significance of strategic planning tools and analytical skills to monitor category management. .Kim and Suresh (2015) argued that it is important for firms resources, including internal and external skills and functional competencies, to respond rapidly to a changing business environment because it impacts upon strategic sourcing and e-procurement in terms of performance. . Cho et al., (2019), argued that when firms sourcing decisions are not successful through mainly using the resource-based-view approach, the internal view of firms are that, it may be that the core competencies, knowledge and skills required for strategic sourcing differ dramatically from those incorporating interpersonal and managerial skills rather than just technical knowledge. Cho et al., (2019), also states that the relationship between purchasing skills and strategic purchasing was found to be significantly different between those having higher supplier integration, technical skills and process skills when compared to those having lower scores in these areas. Kincses (2018) argued that where purchasing achieved the strategic function, the most important skill sets identified in this study are negotiation, strategic thinking, and decision-making, while for the capable purchasing function, the most important skill sets are: team, decision-making, and negotiation skill sets. In addition, for the undeveloped purchasing function, the top skill sets are process management, behavioural and technical skill sets. Campion et al., (2011) argued that issues of granularity (clustering) of competencies into competency are dependent on the use of the concept of competency based within an organisational context and job analysis. Bals et al.,(2019), acknowledged that different clusters of competencies are identified in past literatures and confirms the support for those who describe competencies as encompassing knowledge, motives, traits and skills as shown in Figure 11 below

Figure 11: Bals et al., (2019) matching of Competencies with Tassabehji and Moorhouse (2008) and additional competencies gathered in their interviews.

Matching competencies – competencies identified by Tassabehji and Moorhouse (2008) and found in the interviews

Technical Skills	Interpersonal Skills	Internal/External Enterprise Skills	Strategic Business Skills
Basic knowledge on PSM role & processes	Analytical skills	Change Management	Business Acumen
Computer Literacy	Conflict Resolution	Communication skills	Financial acumen
Contract Management	Creativity	Cross-functional abilities & knowledge	PSM Best Practice Intelligence Scouting
Cost savings	Decision making	Engineering	Risk management
eProcurement Technology	Effective questioning techniques	Finance	Strategic thinking
Intellectual Property	Integrity	Logistics	
KPI Reporting Design	Interpersonal Communication	Manufacturing/Production	
Languages	Knowledge sharing	Marketing	
Negotiation	Leadership	Quality (QHSE)	
Process optimization	Learning agility	R&D	
Product knowledge	Prioritization	Supply Chain	
Project Management	Remote Virtual Working	Sales	
Quality assurance	Results focus driving for results	Cultural awareness	
Strategic sourcing	Structured way of working	Customer Focus	
Tools and Systems Implementation	Teamwork-working in teams	Networking	
		Stakeholder Relationship Management	
		Supplier management	

Additional competencies – competencies NOT identified by Tassabehji and Moorhouse (2008) and found in the interviews

Technical Skills	Interpersonal Skills	Internal/External Enterprise Skills	Strategic Business Skills
Automation	Curiosity		Critical thinking
Big Data Analytics	Deal with ambiguity		Holistic Supply Chain Thinking
Innovation sourcing	Humility		Sustainability
Innovative sourcing approaches	Mobility		
	Openness, Open-minded		
	Passion		
	Resilience		
	Self-confidence		
	Self-reflection		
	Self-reliance		

Source: Adapted from Bals et al (2019)

The summary Table 19 below is derived from a synthesis of extant literature, detailing examples of elements of competency and competencies that exist and the implications for category management and strategic sourcing processes in the private sector context. The literature indicates deficiencies in the appreciation of the elements of competency and competencies in the practice of CM and SS processes.

Table 19: Examples of Elements of Competency and Competencies for Category Management and Strategic Sourcing compared & contrasted and implications for Private Sector

Sources: Author / (Year)	Rafati and Poels (2016)	Bals et al., (2019)
Elements of Competency for CM and SS processes in private sector	Elements of competency and competencies are said to be an operand resources that are as usually intangible, dynamic and active resources, that act upon other resources to create benefits, for example knowledge and skills. They are also said to be the essential component of differentiation and the fundamental source of competitive advantage . Competencies are seen as the firm's specific strengths that allow a company to gain competitive advantage. The tactical spend approach and the strategic value management approaches relies on skills, business skills, ICT skills, technical skills, organizational skills, technologies (eg. time) rather than value creation factors such as: capabilities, competencies and resources.	The argument is that different clusters of competencies identified in extant literatures, confirms the support for those who describe competencies as encompassing knowledge, motives, traits and skills. The article also outlined the following constituents of competencies as encompassing: • negotiation, communication and relationship management (e.g. 'Interpersonal communication'), * strategy and analytics (e.g. 'Strategic thinking'), * professional knowledge requirements (e.g. 'Basic knowledge). • As future requirements, competencies in the areas of sustainability and digitisation were identified ; • new competency areas are related to digitisation (e.g. 'eProcurement Technology 'Automation'), * innovation (e.g. 'Innovative sourcing'); and * sustainability; • interpersonal skills cluster, most of them at the intersection between competencies and traits (e.g. 'Deal with Ambiguity', 'Curiosity', 'Passion').
Similarities	* Identification of knowledge as an element of competency , as an operand resources in organisations * The description of skills as a specific strength for firms that generates desired outcome and identifying these skills clustered around functional attributes, for example ICT skills, technical, organisational and technological skills	* Identification of knowledge as an element of competencies *Describing Skills as a constituent of competencies also clustered around functional attributes such as communications, relational management, strategic thinking and e-Procurement technology and automation
Diferrences	* Time frame of authors observation was in 2016 * No consideration of other elements of competency such as motives and traits. * Competencies were over-emphasized mostly around elements such as knowledge and skills for organizational competitive outcome, with no consideration for organisational operating environments such as: innovation and sustainability.	* Time frame of authors' observation was in 2019. * A profound consideration for other elements of competency such as: motives, traits. * Competencies were clustered around not just functional attributes of knowledfge and skills such as sustainability , digitilisation and innovation but also around other element of compertencies such as: ambiguity, curiosity and passion as 'interpersonal skills'
Implications	The implications of the author observation demonstrate the rapid transformation of procurement from a transactional process to a strategic-orientated process dealing with complex issues such as not just the abilities underpinning the use of business tools but the need to consider the organisational operating environment. * Considerations in the private sector should not just rely on the factors that creastes the bottom-line i.e. profit.	The implications for private sector organisation is that the author was able to identify other elements of competency such as motives and traits as being important in procurement practice demonstrating the transformation of procurement as a strategic instrument, which involves the combination of tangible and intangible resources in order to achieve organisational objectives. * The author articulates that the implications for private sector competency and competencies, encompases all the elements of competency and competencies in order to achieve organisational objectives

2.5.1.2 Elements of competency/competencies and implications for CM and SS processes in public sector context

In the public sector, which includes local government authorities (LGAs), the procurement function is structured as a “firewall” that inhibits the blurring of organisational boundaries that is a characteristic of the “virtual” organisations that have emerged in private sector supply chains (Gianakis and McCue, 2012: 2). This organisational characteristic inhibits public organisations such as LGAs from being able to develop the required long-term relationships with suppliers that allow them to optimise the pursuit of their respective goals. The primary input to the provision of public services is the employees that deliver them. The implementation of CM and SS processes in this context relies on a mature supplier relationship, development and individual competency and competencies. The extant literature observed so far, indicates that elements of competency and competencies are solely about skills and that the competencies and knowledge required in Purchasing and Supply Management are demonstrated mainly in the private sectors as oppose to the public sector. This has implications for the practise of CM and SS processes (Tassabehji and Moorhouse, 2008 and Bals et al., 2019). Evan when recent development such as: innovation (Obwegesera et al., 2018; and Uyarra, 2010), Sustainability (Preuss, 2009): Social Care Strategy (National Social Care Strategy for local government, 2014), are taking into consideration, the indication is that elements of competency and competencies for CM and SS processes have received relatively little attention in the public sector (Bals et al., 2019), despite the rapidly changing environment in the public sector and related implications (Apte et al., 2019; Eckersleyet al., 2011; and Davies 2018). Mckevitt et al., (2012), Volcker (2016) and Bals et al., (2019), have outlined perspectives on advancing elements of competency and competencies that are required in the public procurement and useful for understanding the meaning of competency and competencies in the public sector. McKevitt et al., (2012: 333) “draws on the theory of professions to advance a typology of public procurement competency” and argued that “extant research over-emphasize acquiring specialized knowledge rather than shaping individual identify”, therefore, asserting that this creates “tension”, which needed to be researched in future.. McKevitt et al., (2012: 334) went on to investigate procurement competencies in order to clarity the distinction between “positive and normative procurement practice”. McKevitt et al., (2012: 335), also stated that “competencies need to be situated in organizational and national context”, acknowledging the domination of public procurement policy and the need to adopt a relational approach. McKevitt et al., (2012: 337, 338 and 339) outlined “professional traits of knowledge”, “professional knowledge” pyramid, “procurement skills and competencies” and a competency profile typology as shown in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12: Competency Profile Typology in public sector

COMMERCIAL	PRAGMATIC
* **INPUTS**: Concepts, models and principles * **PROCESS**: Working within the constraints of the organizational culture and legal compliance. No relational engagement with suppliers.	* **INPUTS**: Experience-based rather than conceptual thinking * **PROCESS**: Using a structured procurement process to meet the goals of stakeholders. Some relational engagement with suppliers.
POLITICAL	**PERSON - CENTERED**
* **INPUTS**: People-driven, involving building support through informal networks * **PROCESS**: Using impression management (IM), coaches stakeholders to meet wider organizational goals. Relational engagement with suppliers to acquire informational benefits.	* **INPUTS**: Understanding others rather than analytical thinking. * **PROCESS**: Communicative and partnership approach, empathy / emotions rather than rules.

Source: Adapted from McKevitt at al, (2012: 347)

The argument of Capaldo et al., (2006: 434) is centred around the notion of a situationist perspective of competency, in which they argued that "individual abilities and characteristics are personal attributes such as skills, knowledge and traits, and that resources are means for action such as tools, facilities, relationships with other people, archives, and knowledge repositories that are made available by the individual, the organization, or the external environment as a whole". They went on to define job situations as characteristics of expected competency and emergent competency. They outlined a typology and levels of competencies as shown in Figure 13:

Figure 13: Situationist perspective: Typologies and Levels of Competencies

Technical-Specialized Knowledge
Basic knowledge of the nature and role of the company X
Knowledge of own organizational context and the dynamics of current changes X
Knowledge of the principal organizational theories and their evolution over time X
Knowledge of techniques and tools for the analysis of the organization and operative and management processes X
Knowledge of techniques of analysis, planning, and evaluation of work positions X
Knowledge of the techniques relative to qualitative and quantitative planning of human resources X
Knowledge of techniques and tools in knowledge management X
Knowledge of techniques of the gathering of statistical data and analysis of productivity and efficiency indicators X
Self-Efficacy
Decisional autonomy X
Capability for communication and reporting X
Capability for transferring knowledge X
Problem solving X
Managerial Competencies
Ability to analyze and diagnose organizational problems at the macro and micro level X
Ability to apply techniques of knowledge management X
Ability to elaborate projects for organizational change X
Relational Competencies
Ability to work as part of a team X
Ability to communicate and willingness to discuss X
Ability to manage conflicts

Source: Adapted from Capaldo etal., (2006)

The argument of Capaldo et al., (2006) on the perspective of competency and competencies coincides with the argument put forward by McKevitt et al., (2012: 333), which highlights that “extant researches over-emphasize acquiring specialized knowledge rather than shaping individual identify, which then creates tension” in terms of how competency and competencies are perceived.

Volcker (2016) outlined key competencies required for the public procurement workforce, clustered around three dimensions: process and policy comprehension; functional requirements and analytical skill and stakeholder engagement as shown in Figure 14 below

Figure 14: Competencies required of the public procurement workforce:

PROCESS AND POLICY COMPREHENSION	FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND ANALYTICAL SKILLS	STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
Policies and Regulations	Requirements Planning and Understanding	Internal Customer Alignment and Expertise
Program and Project Management	Business Acumen and Financial Analyses	Market Alignment and Expertise
Contracting Process	Spend analysis: Understand past, current, and future projected spending.	Supplier Engagement
	Cost and price analysis	
	Market analysis	
	Problem Solving and Critical Thinking	
	Risk Analysis and Management	
	Negotiations	
	Contract Management and Administration	

Source: Adapted from Volcker (2016)

Table 20 below provides an overview of different examples of elements of competency and competencies and the implications for CM and SS processes in the public sector context:

Table 20: Examples of Elements of Competency and Competencies for Category Management and Strategic Sourcing compared & contrasted and implications for Public Sector

Sources: Author / (Year)	Zawawia., et al., (2014).	Volcker (2016)
Elements of Competency for CM and SS processes in private sector	The argument is that stakeholder management, contract management, bid evaluation, risk management and regulatory governance skills were the most important overall. These were outlined as: PFI Procurement skills: Stakeholder management skills Contract management skills Bid Evaluation skills Risk identification and management skills Regulatory governance skills Negotiation skills Business analysis skills Life-cycle costing skills Environmental/sustainability skills Financial engineering skills Human capital skills Contract Design skills Manage external advisers Design/Technical Skills Sector knowledge Output specification skills Demand forecasting skill	The argument is about the Key competencies required of the public procurement workforce. The author outlined the competency as: Competency Areas: PROCESS AND POLICY COMPREHENSION • Policies and Regulations • Program and Project Management • Contracting Process Competency Areas: FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND ANALYTICAL SKILLS • Requirements Planning and Understanding. • Business Acumen and Financial Analysis • Spend analysis: Understand past, current, and future projected spending. • Cost and price analysis: Ensure that government is getting the best value in exchange • Market analysis: Understand supplier capabilities, costs, pricing, product and service trends, and overall supplier market dynamics. • Problem Solving and Critical Thinking • Risk Analysis and Management • Negotiations • Contract Management and Administration Competency Areas: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT • Internal Customer Alignment and Expertise • Market Alignment and Expertise • Supplier Engagement
Similarities	* The author identified different skills as the only principal element of competency and observed several different types of competencies needed for accomplising category management and strategic sourcing.	* The author also identified skills as an element of competency and competencies required for practicing category management and strategic sourcing
Diferrences	* Although author identified skills as an element of competency and the numerous competencies required but failed to granulate the competencies as categories despite each competencies requiring different individual approaches, and internalised resource input as a response to situations.	* Author have identified skills as an element of competency and the associated competencies required. The author also granulated the skills under one category called: Analytical Skills. * The author also identified other elements of competency such as knowledge and competencies granulated under process and policy administration. * The author further identified other elements of competency and competencies granulated as stakeholder engagement, which provides the perception of other elements of competency, described as internal customer and market alignment expertise
Implications	The implications for public sector procurement skiills although plays an important role in procurement practice but other elements of competency such as: knowledge, motives, traits plays important roles too. These observations of elements of competency and competencies by the author ignores the fact that skills have developmental propertise, which are reliant on other elements of competency and competencies for effectiveness in order to contribute to organizational performance	The implications for public sector organisations are that although, skills and knowledge are operand resources and drivers of competency and important, other elements of competency such as motives, traits, plays a role in business tools such as category management and strategic sourcing because of the complexity and dynamism of the environment organisations operate in such as CM and SS process life-cycle. For example, the suppliers and the stakeholders are numerous, with individual business structures and strategies, and changes due to economic, social and environmental factors. The collaborations required by organizations for the management of the stakeholders, will not only depend on knowledge and skills, they will also depend on other elements of competency and competencies to bring about the desired organizational outcomes.

2.5.1.3 Knowledge Gap

The literature review indicates a variety of issues inherent in CM and SS processes. Because the origin of CM and SS processes lies within the strategic management of goods and services in the private sector and is nascent in the public sector, there are implications for elements of CM and SS competency and competencies. The concepts of CM and SS have been applied in areas as diverse as tensions associated with the sharing and outsourcing of service supply management (Handfield et al., 2009 and 2015) and cross-functional interaction (Foersti, 2013). Researchers in the field of PSM currently differ in their opinions as to the over-emphasis of knowledge and skills (McKevitt at al., 2012; Capaldo et al., 2006) which is prevalent within literature focusing on the private sector as shown in Figure 21 below. Other elements of competency and competencies are under-developed especially when considering all the elements of competency and competencies that shapes purchasing and procurement of goods and services in industries (McKevitt at al., 2012 and Capaldo et al 2006 and Feisel et al., 2008). The implications for CM and SS processes are noted as important because the nature of CM is seen as an "end-user-led process and strategic sourcing tending to be purchasing led process" (Apte et al., 2019: 170). However, this literature review clearly indicates a gap in the extant literature since only three empirical studies have included CM and SS processes in their research and the associated element of competency and competencies in the public sector context as shown in Table 21 below

Table 21: Emergence of Key Elements of Competency from Extant Literature by Authors and Industry sector and Reasons

Sources: Author / (Year)	Elements of Competency	Industry sector (Private or Public)	Issues surrounding the reason
Rafati and Poels (2015)	Knowledge and Skills	Private	Business tools that are used to enhance organizational performance by using analytical tools for decision-making
Anagnosta (2018)	Knowledge and Skills	Private	Automation of category management and strategic sourcing processes
Bag et al., (2020	Knowledge and Skills	Private	Business process performance tools
Handfield et al., (2015 Feisel et al., (2011)	Knowledge and Skills	Private	Supplier management
Levenson et al., (2006) Shukla et al., (2013); Williams et al., (2018)	Knowledge and Skills	Private	Cross-functional integration
Tatham et al., (2017); Campion et al., (2011); Su (2018); Johnanson et al., (2013); Calpado et al., (2006)	Knowledge and Skills	Private	Supplier selection
Bada et al., (2019); Giunipero (2000); Cho et al., (2019)	Knowledge and Skills	Private	Supplier chain management
Meschnig (2015); Alam (2016); Ellantawy et al., (2014); Kim (2017)	Knowledge and Skills	Private	Training and Purchashing Supply Management
Lau (2010)	Knowledge and Skills	Private	Risk Management and strategic Sourcing
Bals et al., (2019)	Knowledge and Skills and competencies	Private and Public	Competencies in Purchasing and Supply Management
Chao et al., (2019); Schleper et al., (2019)	Knowledge and Skills	Private	Strategic sourcing decision-making
Rafati and Foel (2016, 2018)	Knowledge and Skills and competencies	Private and Public	Category management and Strategic sourcing processes knowledge, skills and competencies

This thesis draws on the research of Bals et al., (2019) and their PSM competencies model for current and future requirements. The researcher used Bals et al's (2019) PSM competencies for a current and future model, clustered around: technical skills; interpersonal skills; internal/external enterprise skills and strategic business skills, as a point of argument. The reason for choosing the competencies model presented by Bals et al., (2019) is due to the fact that it is closely aligned with PSM competencies required for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, compared to the competencies profile typology presented by McKevitt et al., (2012: 333-347), which is clustered around commercial skills, pragmatics skills, policies skills and person-cantered skills, which are underpinned by professional "identity" as opposed to "effective job performance" requirements. Therefore, this thesis will fill a gap which currently exists within the literature by extending elements of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the utilisation of CM and SS processes in public sector procurement, including in LGAs. The research also intends to examine the antecedence of the underlying characteristics shaping the competencies of public procurement practitioners for effective job performance. The researcher envisages that this research will contribute to the practice of CM and SS processes in the public sector, since the procurement paradigm is shifting from the traditionally administrative and transactional function to the strategic management function (Tassabehji and Moorhouse, 2008; Mena et al., 2014; White et al., 2016; Bals et al., 2019).

2.6 Chapter summary and conclusion

2.6.1 The composition of a conceptual framework

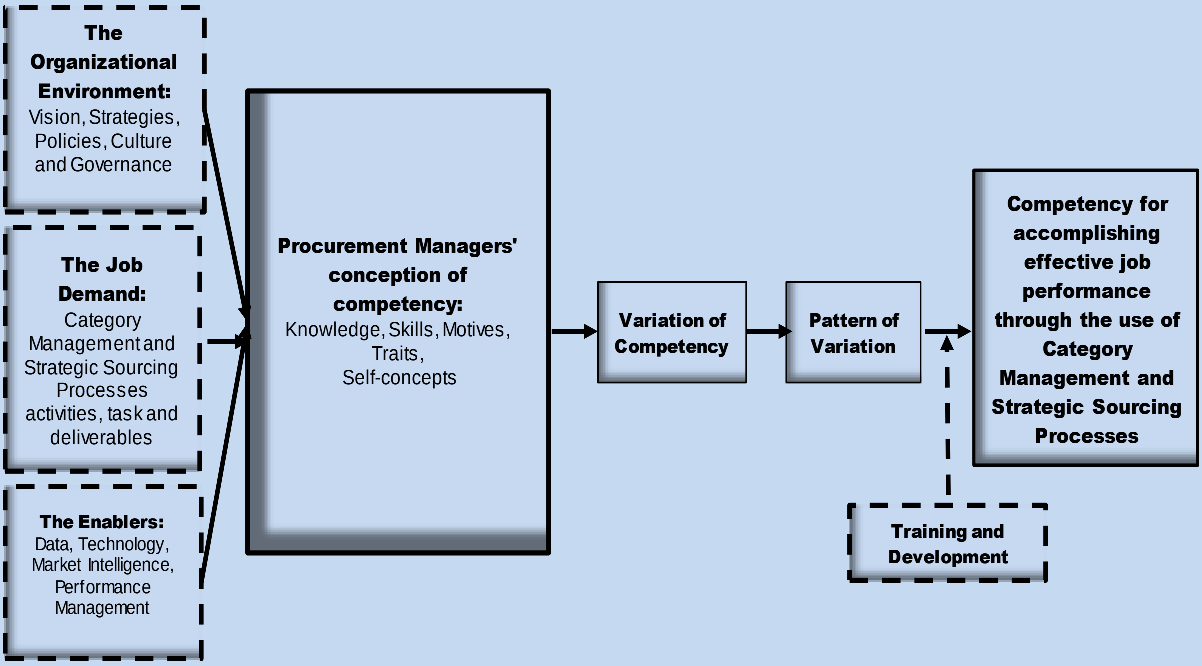
Yin (2013) stated that the development of a rich theoretical framework for establishing the main research question is achieved by exploring the underlying conditions and contextual factors under which a phenomenon is likely or unlikely to occur. This research drew from the literature review, the definitions and concepts of CM and SS processes, competency and competencies. Three concepts are central to this research. These are CM and SS processes, competency and competencies as well as local government as a purchasing organisation.

Given that procurement varies across different public sector institutions, especially in terms of the implementation of CM and SS processes of services (Carpinati et al., 2006), procurement and purchasing decision-making have become driven further by knowledge, skills and competencies. Procurement practitioners are assigned with more responsibilities and require a different skill set, knowledge base and set of competencies to achieve excellence in PSM (Carr and Smeltzer, 2000; Giunipero and Percy, 2000). However, most of the academic research in this field has mainly identified the ideal skill set purchasing practitioners should possess, and not what shapes individual “identity” (McKevitt et al., 2012: 2) or what future competency and competencies are required in PSM and disciplines such as CM and SS (Bals et al., 2019) for accomplishing effective job performance, and the need for taking into consideration a situationist perspective which exists in the implementation of CM and SS processes (Calpado et al., 2006).

On this basis, the researcher proposes a new definition of competency as: “*an ambidexterity of knowledge, skills, motives, self-concept, and traits that ameliorate the internalised capability of individual as the antecedent for accomplishing effective job performance in a given situation”.* The researcher's own definition is based on the hybridisation of a situationist approach and a psycho-cognitive approach, as outlined in the extant literature.

This study proposes that in order to understand what shapes the accomplishment of effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, it is important to understand the variability of procurement practitioners’ experience of competency in terms of CM and SS processes. This is illustrated in Figure 15 below:

Figure 15: Research Study Conceptual Framework



Source: Modified Adaptation from extant literatures such as:(Boyatzis, 1982; Lau, 2010; McKevitt et al., 2012; Zawawa et al., 2014; Rafati et al., 2015; Volcker, 2016; Anagnosta, 2018; William et al., 2018; Bals et al., 2019; Chae et al., 2019; Choe et al., 2019; Bag et al., 2020)

The conceptual framework provides a general context to explore the participants selected. It also allows for the analysis of the underlying characteristics of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the utilisation of category management and strategic sourcing processes, relevant to an LGA context.

2.6.2 Central Research Question

The researcher framework (Section 2.6.1), established by the aim and objectives, outlined the scope of the literature reviewed (in Chapter 2) and where the following central research question (CRQ) has emerged:

“What are the qualitatively different experiences of procurement managers in English local government, in relation to competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes?”

The supportive research questions (SRQ) that underpin the CRQ are:

(1) What are the critical aspects that differentiate qualitatively varying experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes?

(2) What are the critical incident event aspects of the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes?

This focuses the researcher's approach to ensure both clarity of purpose and also to guide the development of the research methodology and strategy.

2.6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed existing literature related to CM and SS processes, competency and competencies and public sector procurement, demonstrating both a theoretical background and current state of knowledge. Firstly, the chapter has offered insights into the literature review approach, and explained the rationale behind methods underpinning the review, followed by the search criteria, and logic of the chapter. Secondly, the conceptual development of CM and SS processes is discussed with particular focus on the description of the relevant literature on the topic of CM and SS, the definition, assumptions, issues, processes and appropriate tables and figures to demonstrate the complexity of the concept. Thirdly, the chapter offers insight into the concepts of competency and competencies, describing the historic development, meaning and definition and thereby demonstrating the current ambiguity and various ways in which the definitions are conceived, whilst also comparing competency and competencies and explaining the concept through the theory of performance. Fourthly, the chapter has offered insights into public sector procurement, discussing it in the context of local government as a purchasing organisation, and its implications. Moreover, the chapter offers an insight into the empirical evidence from literature on the elements of competency and competencies and implications for CM and SS processes, both in the private and public sector.

Finally, a conceptual framework has been developed to present the critical construct of this present research, as well as the connections between each. An overview of the literature and the research framework has informed the basis for developing the central research question.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on phenomenography as the research approach adopted for the study. It commences by stating the reason for adopting a qualitative research inquiry, followed by the reason for employing phenomenography as the research approach. The chapter then provides an explanation of the nature of phenomenography and outlines several major characteristics of phenomenography, specifying some essential terminology. The philosophical foundation is analysed based on ontological and epistemological assumptions, and the relationship between the two is investigated. Alternative research approaches such as grounded theory and phenomenology, which share some commonalities with phenomenography, are also considered. Furthermore, a comparison made between phenomenography and phenomenology reconfirms the appropriateness of the utilisation of a phenomenographic approach for this study.

The first part of the chapter is devoted to phenomenography in general, and the numerous frameworks developed by phenomenographic researchers are reviewed, contrasted and selected in the second part of the chapter, in order to facilitate a better understanding and analysis of conceptions. This chapter includes theoretical considerations, and the implementation of the empirical study is articulated.

3.2 Description of the research approach taken

The research approach taken for this present study is a qualitative, inductive research strategy and a phenomenographic research approach.

3.2.1 Reasons for adopting a qualitative research inquiry

According to Purdie & Hattie (2002), there are generally two different ways to study conceptions of competency: quantitatively or in an experientially-oriented fashion. This dichotomy is related to the division of quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research assumes that there is an objective world that can be observable and measurable; this is referred to as a positivist approach (Burns, 2000). It seeks causal explanations based on natural sciences and stresses "empirical quantifiable observations" (Burns, 2000: 2). Whereas, in contrast, the qualitative orientation claims that the world is socially-constructed, and is advocated by interpretivists (Glesne, 1999). According to Glesne (1999: 5), "qualitative orientation underlines understandings, which are derived from humanities with emphasis on holistic qualitative information and interpretive approaches". In addition, Strauss and Corbin (1998) deem that qualitative methods can be applied to achieve a better understanding in relation to certain phenomena that people know little about.

The researcher argues that it would be more appropriate to adopt a qualitative research methodology in this study because firstly, it focuses on understanding the competency experiences held by the participants. Secondly, it invites procurement managers to talk about their lived experience of competency in a natural context, no experiment is conducted. Thirdly, it is concerned with understanding the qualitatively different experiences of a group of procurement managers in relation to competency, which has seldom been undertaken before. Having determined the research tradition, the researcher will elaborate on the reasons for using phenomenography as the research approach in this study. Phenomenography has been selected as a qualitative research approach to guide data collection and analysis in order to identify, analyse and describe the experiences of procurement managers in relation to competency. In this present study, the phenomenon of interest is the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. There are several reasons for the selection of this research methodology. Firstly, the selection of research methodology should be primarily based on the aim of research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Phenomenography is defined by Marton (1994: 9) as “the empirical study of the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which various phenomena in, and aspects of, the world around us are experienced, conceptualised, understood, perceived and apprehended”. This study sets out to investigate the qualitatively different experiences of procurement managers in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. A further goal is to analyse the variations of the conceptions of competency held by a cohort of 10 procurement managers in ELG. It is contended that the research interest and the approach adopted are highly compatible. Therefore, phenomenography fits well within the aim of this research.

Secondly, the key principle of a second-order perspective in phenomenography (Marton, 1981 and 2015) satisfies the need to explore conceptions of competency from the participants’ viewpoint. The research interest ultimately lies in the participants’ competency experience, rather than in the researcher's personal analysis of competency. Consequently, this research targets the relationship between the experiencer (procurement managers) and the experienced (competency). Marton (1986: 33) contends that researchers in phenomenography "do not try to describe things as they are, nor discuss whether or not things can be described 'as they are'; rather, to try to characterise how things appear to people". In this sense, taking a second-order perspective as described by (Marton, 1981, 2015), as one of the most basic tenets in phenomenography, seems to be an appropriate way in which to achieve this goal. Examining competency from the perspective of PMs is vitally important, in that it could enhance an understanding of the nature of competency and further provide insights into improving approaches to competency and competency quality as a whole (Entwistle, 1984).

Thirdly, the theoretical framework developed by phenomenographic researchers (Marton, 1988; Marton and Booth, 1997; Pramling, 1983) provides the basis for an in-depth analysis of differing competency conceptions and the possible relationship therein, to enable a comprehensive and logical understanding of competency. The 'new phenomenography' (Marton and Booth, 1997; Marton and Pang, 1999) "shifts the primary focus from methodological to theoretical questions" Pang, (2003; Holmqvist et al., 2019 and Rovio-Johansson et al., 2016) could help to provide an insightful analysis of different ways that competency is experienced. The focus of this development is the nature of the distinct ways of experiencing a phenomenon, which draws on the anatomy of awareness. Therefore, differences may be described as changes in the experiencers' structure of awareness. The 'new phenomenography' facilitates differentiation between one way of understanding something and another in terms of changing patterns of awareness structure. Some aspects of a particular conception may be more or less important than others in a different conception. Therefore, the logical relationships between conceptions are expected to be built up and an overview of competency conceptions could be shaped. The holistic picture demonstrating the position of each competency conception could help to improve experience of competency and further the quality of CM and SS processes. To understand the ways that competency is experienced by PMs in ELG is a significant aim for this study. Meanwhile, it is also an expectation that the research findings can be used for improving the competency experience and quality of CM and SS processes. Therefore, as McKenzie (2003: 83) contends: “when one of the intentions of research is to make use of the findings for improving practice, it becomes relevant to consider pragmatic criteria in choosing an appropriate research approach”. Bowden (2000: 3) claims that phenomenography has a developmental aspect, which means seeking to “find out how people experience some aspect of their world, and then to enable them or others to change the way their world operates, and it usually takes place in a formal educational setting”. Phenomenographic research findings and outcomes are not only for understanding, but also for applying, in order to help PMs to apply appropriate competencies and further improve CM and SS processes in practice. As Bowden (2000: 4) argues, “insights from the research outcomes can help in the planning of competency experiences, which will lead PMs to a more powerful understanding of the phenomenon under study, and of other similar phenomena.

3.2.2 Phenomenography

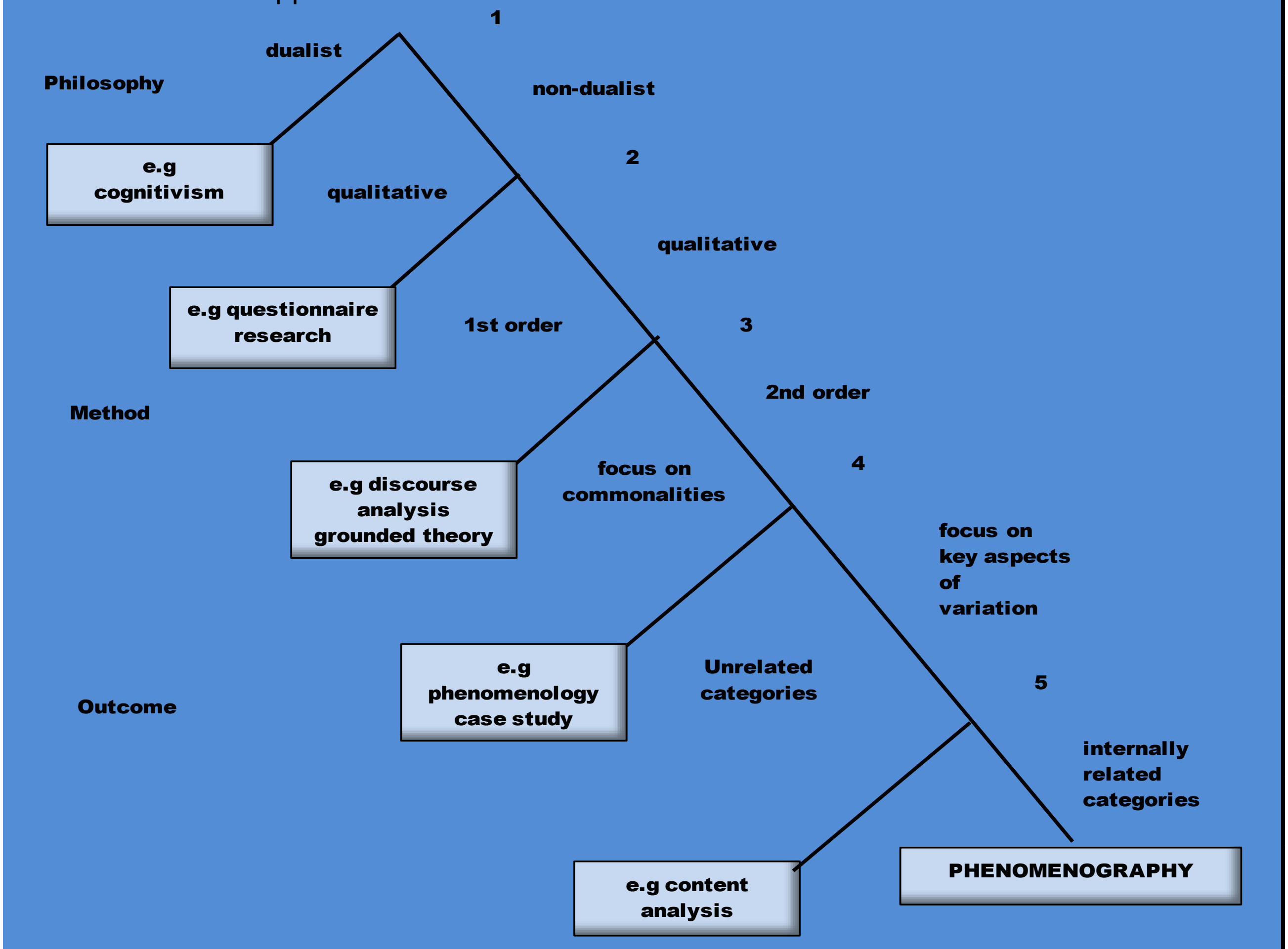
3.2.2.1 Definition

Phenomenography was developed in Sweden at the University of Gothenburg in the 1970s by a team of researchers led by Florence Marton, as a qualitative research approach focusing on the ways in which individuals experience a number of phenomenons, amongst them: literature, number, reading, Australian Aboriginal culture, domestic violence and environmental responsibility (Marton 1994). The term 'phenomenography' originates from the Greek words 'phenomenon' (appearance) and 'graphein' (description); thus, phenomenography is based on a description of things as they appear to be (Pang, 2003: 145). Marton (1994: 9) defines phenomenography as "the empirical study of the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which various phenomena in, and aspects of, the world around us are experienced, conceptualised, understood, perceived and apprehended", and it is "interested primarily in surfacing variation of experience and understanding" (Cousin, 2009: 183). As Svensson (1997) contends, the introduction of phenomenography inspires an alternative way to study learning, which could be different from more traditional quantitative research.

Trigwell (2006) concludes that phenomenography has several key features. Firstly, philosophically it is non-dualistic; in other words, meaning emerges from the relationship between individuals and phenomena. The assumption differentiates phenomenography from a mental model, which separates people from reality. Secondly, it is universally believed to be a qualitative approach, which is in contrast to quantitative approaches to studying competency experiences. Thirdly, it takes a second-order perspective by focusing on others' perceptions rather than expressing the researcher's personal opinion. Fourthly, phenomenography emphasises the variations or differences rather than the similarities of experience and understanding. Finally, the categories found and interpreted are relational. As indicated in Figure 16 below, all these characteristics are located on the right-hand branch. The results derived from phenomenography are typically categories of description (Marton,

1981) and ‘outcome space’ (Marton and Dahlgren, 1976), which consists of distinct conceptions and the relationship therein.

Figure 16 Defining Phenomenography as a point of departure between phenomenography and other research approaches



Source: Adapted from Trigwell (2006: 369)

Despite the fact that some methodological factors and theoretical components relate to phenomenography, Marton and Booth (1997: 111) claim that it is neither a method nor a theory of experience, rather it is essentially “a way of an approach to identifying, formulating, tackling certain sorts of research questions”. The central interest of phenomenographic research lies in “the variations in ways people experience phenomena in their world and phenomenographic researchers aim to describe that variation” (Marton & Booth, 1997: 121). What phenomenographic researchers are seeking is “the totality of ways in which people experience, or are capable of experiencing, the object of interest and interpret it in terms of distinctly different categories that capture the essence of the variation" (Marton & Booth, 1997: 121).

Having defined phenomenography, the subsequent sections provide further analysis on the three key terms in phenomenography, which is followed by an exploration of philosophical foundation.

3.2.2.2 Outlines of several major characteristics of phenomenography

3.2.2.2.1 Ways of experiencing (conceptions)

The significant driving force of phenomenography and the value of obtaining an understanding of human experience (Yates et al., 2012), is captured by Marion's (1996: 178) statement that "in order to make sense of how people handle problems, situations, the world, we have to understand the way in which they experience the problems, the situations, the world, they are handling or acting in relation to. Accordingly, the capability for acting in a certain way reflects a capability of experiencing something in a certain way. The latter does not cause the former. They are logically intertwined".

The focus and also the unit of phenomenographic study are expressed as the way of experiencing the phenomenon in question (Marton and Booth, 1997). A certain way of experiencing something is "experiencing something as something, experiencing a meaning that is dialectically intertwined with a structure"; and it is also "a way of discerning something from, and relating it to, a context" (Marton And Booth, 1997: 112). Marton and Booth (1997) claim that there must be some ways of experiencing things that are more sophisticated and comprehensive than others, and one way of experiencing can be distinguished from another based on the fact that "different aspects or different parts of the whole may or may not be discerned and be objects of focal awareness" (Marton and Booth, 1997: 112).

In phenomenographic studies, ways of experiencing substantially indicate a relationship between the experiencer and the phenomenon being experienced. A number of terms like 'conceptions', 'ways of understanding', 'ways of comprehending' and 'conceptualisations' have been used as synonyms for 'ways of experiencing' (Marton and Booth, 1997). Furthermore, some verbs such as 'experience', 'perceive', 'conceive', 'conceptualise' and 'understand' can be used interchangeably (Bamwesiga et al., 2013), but they should be used in an experiential sense rather than a psychological, cognitivist sense (Marton and Booth, 1997). Since individuals have distinctive ways of experiencing a common phenomenon, it could be inferred that conceptions are relational and in most cases hierarchical (Åkerlind, 2005a; 2005d). Phenomenographic researchers are not only expected to uncover different conceptions, but they are also required to determine the hierarchical relationships between various conceptions or ways of experiencing (Trigwell, 2006). Theoretically, the ways of experiencing obtained from a phenomenographic study are able to represent the full range of opinions held by a group of people on a particular phenomenon, at a specific time (Åkerlind, 2005d). One of the key assumptions of phenomenography is that the qualitatively different ways in which people experience a certain phenomenon is finite. Marton (1996) and Marton and Booth (1997) contend that people are able to communicate with each other because there are a limited number of ways of experiencing phenomena, and it is only possible to focus on certain aspects of a phenomenon at a time. If the ways of experiencing are infinite, aspects of the world would be unrecognisable and consensus could be difficult to reach. Phenomenographic researchers accept the assumption that it is reasonable to experience phenomena in the world with a different focus in a limited number of ways rather than as an infinite total experience.

3.2.2.2.2 Second-order perspectives

Marton (1981: 178) proposes that there are two different pathways in which to study various phenomena in the world: the first-order perspective in which "we orient ourselves towards the world and make statements about it", and the second-order perspective, whereby "we orient ourselves towards people's ideas about the world (or their experience of it) and we make statements about people's ideas about the world (or about their experience of it)".

Traditionally, if researchers intended to study a competency phenomenon, they would analyse it from their own perspective (first-order). By contrast, phenomenography chooses the practitioner's perspective (second-order) (Marton and Svensson, 1979) or a 'from-the-inside' perspective to describe phenomena as people experience them (Richardson, 1999). As Entwistle (1984) claims, studies adopting the first-order perspective essentially insist on an external view in examining competency and they often fail to provide useful and new insights. Thus, the phenomenographic approach was invented choosing a second-order perspective (Marton, 1981 and 2015) to overcome this limitation, and it is basically a qualitative, rather than a quantitative, research approach (Sandberg, 1997). There are two reasons for favouring such an innovative perspective. Firstly and most obviously, the researcher considered that to find out the different ways in which people experience, interpret, understand, apprehend, perceive or conceptualise various aspects of reality is sufficiently interesting in itself, not least because of the pedagogical potentiality and necessity of the field of knowledge to be formed. Secondly, the descriptions that the researcher arrived at from the "second-order perspective are autonomous" in the sense that they cannot be derived from descriptions arrived at from the "first-order perspective" (Marton, 1981: 178).

3.2.2.2.3 Categories of description and outcome space

The results of a typical phenomenographic study are usually categories of description (Marton, 1981). As Booth (1993: 189) points out, the "fundamental result of a phenomenographic study is a careful description of the categories found" and the "categories of understanding of a phenomenon are most often referred to as conceptions". Based on the categories of description, the outcome space can be further constructed, which "shows the relationships among the various categories of description according to their logical complexity and inclusiveness and describes the variation in the possible ways in which a phenomenon is experienced" (Marton and Pang, 2008: 536).

Laurillard (1993: 45) identifies three kinds of outcome space. The structural relationship between the categories may be:

- an inclusive, hierarchical, outcome space in which the categories further up the hierarchy include previous, or lower, categories
- an outcome space in which the different categories are related to the history of interviewee's experience of the phenomenon, rather than to each other

- an outcome space which represents a developmental progression, in the sense that the conceptions represented by some categories have more explanatory power than others

Guisasola et al., (2013), Marton (1996) and Marton and Booth (1997) state that there are three criteria for categories of description, the first of which is that each category should be able to relate to the phenomenon and describe a different aspect of it in order to depict a unique way of understanding the phenomenon. Secondly, each category should be logically and hierarchically related, from simplicity to complexity. Thirdly, the number of categories should be controlled to be as few in number as possible.

Furthermore, as a justification, the phenomenographic approach has been widely used to explore the qualitatively different ways in which people experience a phenomenon in a huge number of disciplines such as: economics, bioscience, physics, chemistry, information technology, mathematics, nursing education, geography, librarianship, project management, psychology, engineering and computer science (Chen and Partington, 2006; Chen et al., 2008; Dahlgren, 1980; Diehm and Lupton, 2012; Dupin et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2008; Forster, 2015; Linder and Erickson, 1989; Lybeck et al., 1988; Maybee, 2013; Shenton and Hayter, 2007; Trigwell, 2006; van Rossum and Schenk, 1984; Virtanen and Lindblom-Ylänne, 2010; Wakimoto and Bruce, 2014).

3.2.3 Philosophical underpinnings of phenomenography

Phenomenography is not based on an "equal foundation of metaphysical belief because metaphysical beliefs and ideas about the nature of reality do not come first" (Svensson, 1997: 44). Nevertheless, phenomenography does make some "assumptions about the nature of the objects of study i.e., the nature of conceptions and knowledge" (Svensson, 1997: 164-165). The philosophical assumptions that underpin the present research study are discussed below.

3.2.3.1 Ontological issues

Ontology is centred on the "nature of reality" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 4). According to Uljens (1996: 14), the ontological issue in phenomenography refers to "the relation between consciousness and reality". In ontology terms, a basic tenet of phenomenography is that the nature of reality is only one world, which is experienced and understood in different ways by human beings, defined as "non-dualistic". This implies that the experience is a relationship between subject and object which is inseparable, multiple and relational (Marton, 2000: 105).

Associated with this ontological stance, phenomenography uses a second-order perspective with the aim of interpreting other people's experience of a particular phenomenon, as opposed to a first-order perspective. A first-order perspective makes statements about the world. A second-order perspective allows researchers to find out the different ways in which "people experience, interpret, understand, apprehend, perceive of, and conceptualize various aspects of reality" (Marton, 1981: 177). Phenomenographic researchers undertake research from a second-order perspective. Experiences are reflected in statements about the world, in acts carried out, and in artefacts produced.

3.2.3.2 Epistemological issues

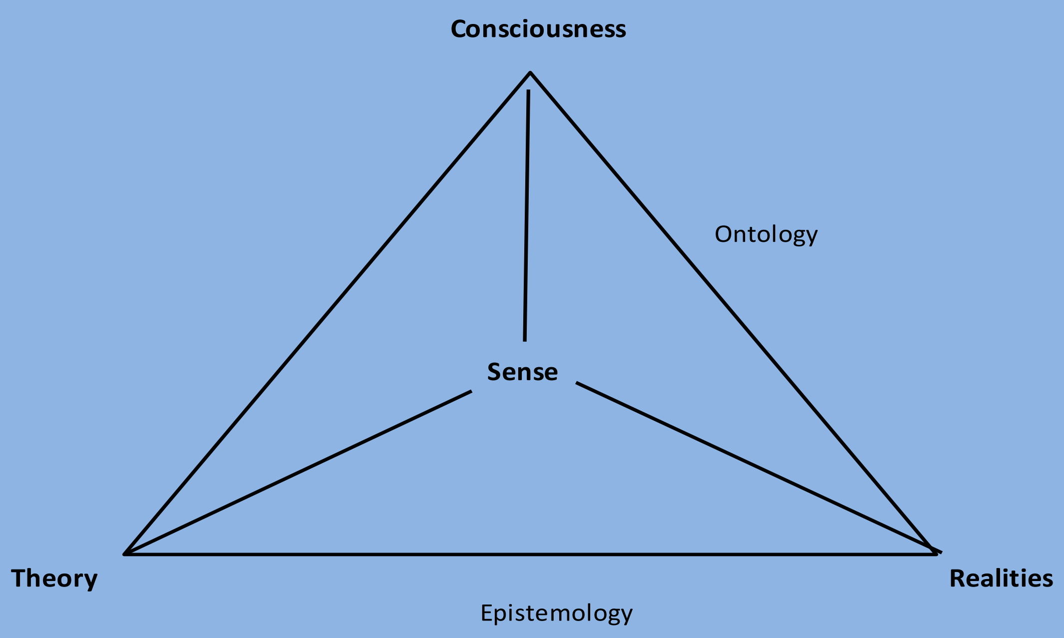
Epistemological assumptions concern "the origins of knowledge" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 4). The epistemological issues in phenomenography are concerned with the “relationships between reality and theory”, described for example in “language, sign and symbol” (Uljens, 1996: 115).

The interest of phenomenographic researchers lies in the individual’s consciousness of reality (ontological issues) as well as their expression of reality (epistemological issues). The epistemology of phenomenography has its emphasis on description. It is concerned with the content of description revealed by individuals in the way that they experience the phenomenon. In phenomenography, knowledge is understood in terms of meaning and the similarities and differences in meaning (Svensson, 1997: 167). Phenomenography conception is also further explained as the way man is related, or rather “conceives self to be related to the world” (Uljens, 1996: 112).

Phenomenographic research seeks to describe the different conceptions of the specific phenomenon under investigation amongst a group of individuals in a specific context. Because the aim of phenomenography is to capture variation, Marton et al., (1997) stated that the terms used do not have to be limited. In this study, the terms experience, conceptualise, perceive and understand are used interchangeably.

The relationship between ontological and epistemological issues in phenomenography is illustrated in Figure 17 below. According to Uljens (1996), the ontological issue relates to the relationship between consciousness (awareness) and reality (phenomenon), while the epistemological issue refers to the relationship between theory (language, sign, and symbol), and reality. The ‘theory’ in the figure refers to “reality only by virtue of the content of a mental state which picks out an object” (Uljens, 1996: 115). Sense can be seen to be the medium of theory and reality, and there is no direct relationship between theory and reality. The difference “between linguistic reference (epistemology) and mental reference (the ontological question) is clarified by noting that a term (sign, word) has no direct relation to an object but is always dependent upon how it is treated by an individual mind" (Uljens, 1996: 115). In a broad sense, ontological assumptions might become epistemological because "the research object has the character of knowledge" (Svensson, 1997: 167).

Figure 17: The relationship between the ontological and epistemological problems



Source: Adapted from Uljens (1996: 115)

3.2.3.3 Consideration of variation theory

Variation theory is considered in this research study because according to Marton and Booth (1997: 142), the "knowledge interest of phenomenographic approach is variation". Variation theory explains that individuals see, understand, and experience the world from their own perspectives (Orgill, 2012).

Therefore, students may not learn effectively if they are not aware of things in exactly the same way as the teacher (Lo, 2012). However, the theory is suitable to improve learning by helping students to develop their own ways of experiencing the phenomenon (or the object of learning). Learning takes place when a student is "capable of being simultaneously and focally aware of other aspects or more aspects of a phenomenon" (Marton and Booth, 1997: 142). Marton, Runesson and Tsui (2004: 7) referred to this as "powerful ways of acting" being derived from "powerful ways of seeing". Lo (2012: 7) supplements that teachers should help students develop "powerful ways of seeing" so that students can become more independent in dealing with new problems and issues in the future.

The theory envisages that for learning to occur, some critical aspects of the object of learning must vary while other aspects remain constant (Ho, 2014; Ko and Marton, 2014; Marton and Booth, 1997). It further suggests that how students perceive a specific object of learning depends on what pattern of variation is provided by the teacher. It is expected that different patterns of variation result in different types of learning. According to Marton et al., (2004: 16-17), there are "four patterns of variation: contrast (i.e., recognizing values of an aspect), generalization (i.e., experiencing varied appearances of the same value), separation (i.e., separating aspects with varying values from invariant aspects), and fusion (i.e., experiencing several critical aspects simultaneously)". Lo and Pong (2005: 21) refer to them as "possible functions". In such a learning study approach (Marton & Pang, 2006), teachers should be able to construct learning instructions and activities for students to experience and discern a particular pattern of variation that can strengthen their learning of the object of learning. Therefore, this variation theory is suitable as a consideration for meeting the aim of this present research study as stated in Chapter One.

Phenomenography is often criticised for a lack of theoretical consideration, because of its empirically-based origin. According to some, early phenomenographic studies excessively emphasise the importance of uncovering variations of people's conceptions, while few reflect on the nature of the way that a phenomenon is experienced (Marton, 1994). In response to this gap in the research, 'new phenomenography' begins to enrich this theme, thereby valuing the theoretical aspect. It was not until the 2000s that the theoretical foundation of phenomenography was elaborated with the so-called 'variation theory' (Marton, 2015; Marton and Booth, 1997; Marton and Tsui, 2004), when the concern changed from methodological to theoretical, namely, "from questions about how to describe different ways of experiencing something to questions concerning what is the nature of the different ways of experiencing something described" (Pang, 2003: 146). In other words, phenomenographic researchers began to "turn from particular research questions (e.g., what is the variation in experiencing X?) to more theoretical questions (e.g., what does it mean to talk about variation in experience? and how does this variation come about?)" (Micari et al., 2000: 461).

This empirical study, which sets out to uncover variations in conceptions of competency held by a group of procurement managers in ELG, belongs to the first line of phenomenographic research. In addition, this research also places emphasis on the theoretical analysis of conceptions and explores the nature of different ways of experiencing or understanding competency, which is a critical concern for 'new phenomenography'. Therefore, it is imperative in this chapter to introduce the theoretical frameworks developed in response to 'new phenomenography' that can be used as analytical tools when examining conceptions. But before expounding the frameworks, it is necessary to consider other potential approaches such as phenomenology that are closely related to phenomenography and might also be appropriate for this study.

3.2.4 Consideration of other research methodologies

The decision to adopt a phenomenographic research approach was reached after consideration was given to a number of other research approaches, such as phenomenology and grounded theory. However, reflecting on the purpose of the research, it was thought that the use of phenomenography was a more appropriate approach than the use of grounded theory. Unlike grounded theory, the phenomenography approach was able to map out the variety of qualitatively different ways that competency is experienced by PMs in ELG for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The researcher accepted that phenomenography does not give voice to individuals in the way that a grounded theory approach does (Kinnunen et al., 2012; Beaulieu, 2017), but nevertheless, with the inclusion of participants' quotes, it would be untrue to say that individual participants' voices are not heard.

3.2.4.1 Phenomenography and phenomenology

The differences between phenomenographic and phenomenological approaches are an ontological. The nature of reality for phenomenology is dualistic, whereas, phenomenography is defined as non-dualistic.

It was Edmund Husserl who first established phenomenology in the 20th century (Larsson and Holmström, 2007). According to Grbich (2012: 92), phenomenology is "an approach that attempts to understand the hidden meanings and the essence of an experience together with how participants make sense of these". Farina (2014:

50), however, argues that there is no generally acceptable definition of phenomenology, and further contends that “it is not a doctrine, nor a philosophical school, but rather a style of thought, a method, an open and ever-renewed experience having different results, and this may disorient anyone wishing to define the meaning of phenomenology”. While Husserl’s phenomenology is regarded as being the classical/realistic/transcendental phenomenology, several forms, including existential phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology and heuristic phenomenology (Grbich, 2012) have since been developed by numerous scholars and philosophers (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990), and they have progressed far beyond Husserl's early work.

A number of scholars have observed the differences and similarities between phenomenography and phenomenology (Marton and Booth, 1997; Neuman, 1997; Pratt, 1992; Sandberg, 1997).

Firstly, phenomenography employs a second-order perspective, whereas phenomenology adopts a first-order perspective (Marton, 1986). Phenomenologists “‘bracket’ (hold in check) their preconceived notions and depict their immediate experience of the studied phenomenon through a reflective turn, bending consciousness back upon itself” (Marton, 1986: 41), while phenomenographic researchers are normally required to take a second-order perspective and interpret the perception of others in terms of the phenomenon in question (Marton and Booth, 1997). Existing experiences, presuppositions, theories, findings and personal biases should be ‘bracketed’ to illustrate subjects’ conceptions as faithfully as possible in phenomenography.

Secondly, phenomenographic researchers do not distinguish between a ‘reflective’ and ‘pre-reflective experience’. Greasley and Ashworth (2007: 821) claim that phenomenography focuses on “reflected experience, meaning that the emphasis is on the experience as experienced”. This emphasis sets aside any pre-reflective, taken-for-granted assumptions in the verbalised experience of the situation, yet both the ‘reflective’ and the ‘pre-reflective’ are the core concepts of phenomenology. This disparity is deemed by Marton (1986) to be the most fundamental difference, following the statement of Edmund Husserl, who emphasised “the distinction between immediate experience and conceptual thought” (Marton, 1986: 41-42). In a phenomenological investigation, researchers should “bracket” the latter and search for the former. Phenomenographic researchers do not make use of this distinction, at least not as a starting point in research. Researchers should try instead to describe relations between the individual and various aspects of the world around them, regardless of whether those relationships are manifested in the forms of immediate experience, conceptual thought, or physical behaviour.

Thirdly, the most predominant difference is that, while the aim of phenomenology is to elicit the essence of all of the ways in which a phenomenon can be experienced, the purpose of phenomenography is to reveal and identify the qualitatively different ways in which people experience a certain phenomenon (Marton, 1988; Neuman, 1997; Sandberg, 1997). They are running in different directions, since one is orientated to the essence and the other to the variations. As Marton (1986: 41) observes, “phenomenographic researchers try to characterise the variations of experience, whilst, for phenomenologists the essence of experience usually is interpreted as that which is common to different forms of experience”.

There are other differences in addition to the notable ones mentioned above. Phenomenography often argues that data analysis should be based on a collective level, yet phenomenology is more interested in the experiences of individuals

(Barnard et al., 1999). With respect to the research outcome, phenomenographic analysis leads to various ways of experiencing certain phenomena, whereas phenomenological analysis results in meanings that are associated with the phenomenon (Barnard et al., 1999). The differences are summarised in Appendix 7.

Also, the roles that researchers play in both research traditions are different. Phenomenographic researchers do not regard themselves as a source of data; rather that their intervention should be kept to a minimum. Data is generated from the transcripts of the informants. On the contrary, phenomenological researchers set personal experience as the point of departure and describe their experience as much as possible (Creswell, 1998).

Aside from the differences, phenomenography and phenomenology have some similarities; for example, they both set human experience and awareness as the object of the research (Barnard et al., 1999). Moreover 'bracketing' is a key practice during data collection and analysis. However, this study aims to understand the different ways that competency is experienced by PMs in ELG in terms of accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes and the concern is describing, interpreting and understanding experiences, whilst not formulating a theory. Therefore, the selection of a research approach based on this focus determines the rejection of phenomenology. The predominant reason for refusing phenomenology lies in its ultimate aim of the single essence or the invariance of a phenomenon. Phenomenology in this sense is significantly contradictory to the concern of this present study. In addition, phenomenology focuses particularly on individual rather than collective experience, which might make it difficult to see the possible differences and similarities of the experiences in relation to the phenomenon. The above sections theoretically outline phenomenography as the research approach adopted in this study. The subsequent parts of this chapter are devoted to articulating and contrasting different theoretical frameworks developed by phenomenographic researchers, and an appropriate framework is selected as a tool for analysing conceptions found in this research.

3.2.5 Theoretical and analytical frameworks for understanding conceptions

The researcher's reason for employing phenomenography as the chosen research approach lies in the theoretical frameworks developed by phenomenographic researchers (Marton, 1988; Marton and Booth, 1997; Pramling, 1983), which enables an in-depth analysis of different conceptions and the potential logical relationship therein to obtain a holistic view of ways of experiencing conception. Therefore, it is necessary in this section to articulate these frameworks and to determine a suitable option.

Conception is the unit of description in phenomenography (Marton and Pong, 2005); yet, there is a need for instruments that can further analyse conceptions. Consequently, a number of researchers (Marton et al., 1993; Pramling, 1983) developed theoretical frameworks for making an in-depth and detailed examination of the elements and structure of conceptions. The two most basic are the what/how framework and the referential/structural framework. Harris (2011: 109) contends that the what/how framework "allows the conception to be analysed separately from the actions and intentions related to it", and the referential/structural framework "allows the parts and contexts of the conception to be identified". In addition, there is a theoretical framework that integrates the what/how framework and the referential/structural framework (Marton & Booth, 1997). These frameworks are used somewhat differently by phenomenographic researchers to meet their own research aims (Marton and Booth, 1997).

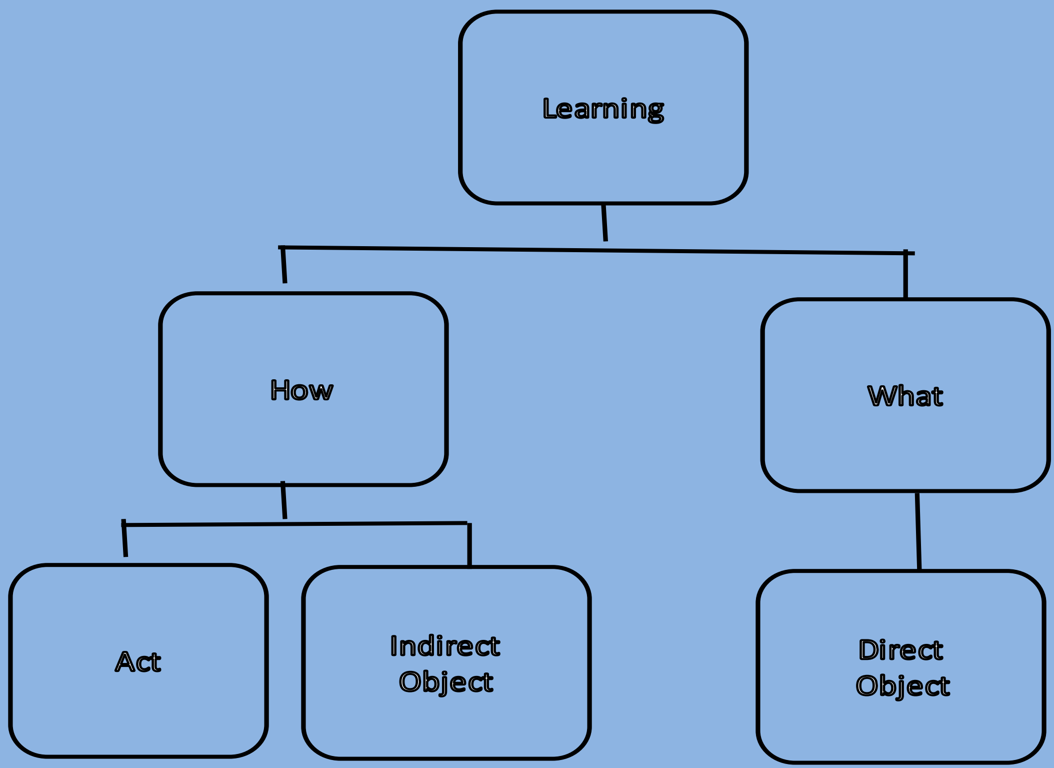
It is worth noting that the what/how and the referential/structural frameworks have distinctive origins, and that researchers may choose to use one or both of them. For instance, Marton et al., (1993) use the integrated framework in their influential research, whereas Fyrenius et al., (2007) solely use the what/how framework to uncover learners' conceptions of medical physiology, and only employ the referential/structural framework to explore tertiary students' conceptions of web-based information searching Based on a systematic review of 56 studies which utilised these frameworks, Harris (2011) finds that 12 of them (21%) only used the what/how framework, whereas 29 (52%) solely used the referential/structural framework, and 15 of them (27%) used both. Since the authors' understanding of these frameworks and some of their key aspects was not totally identical, they tailored them to fit their own research aims (Harris, 2011; Marton and Booth, 1997).

3.2.5.1 The what/how framework

The what/how framework was first proposed by Pramling in 1983, when the author was investigating children's conception of learning. Pramling found that the participants' responses could be categorised into two distinctive questions, one of which was "dealing with what the children perceive as learning" (Pramling, 1983: 88), while the other was "dealing with the children's ideas of how particular learning comes about" (Pramling, 1983: 88). The former may be called the 'what' aspect of learning and the latter the 'how' aspect.

Drawing on the concept of intentionality, Marton and Booth (1997) further contend that the what/how framework contains some subcategories; more specifically, the ‘what’ aspect has a direct object and the ‘how’ aspect has an act and indirect object. They explain that the direct object is “the content that is being learned” (Marton and Booth, 1997: 84), the indirect object refers to “the quality of the act of learning what the act of learning aims at” (Marton and Booth, 1997: 84), and the act is “the way in which the act of learning is carried out” (Marton and Booth, 1997: 84). Their analysis is demonstrated in Figure 18 below:

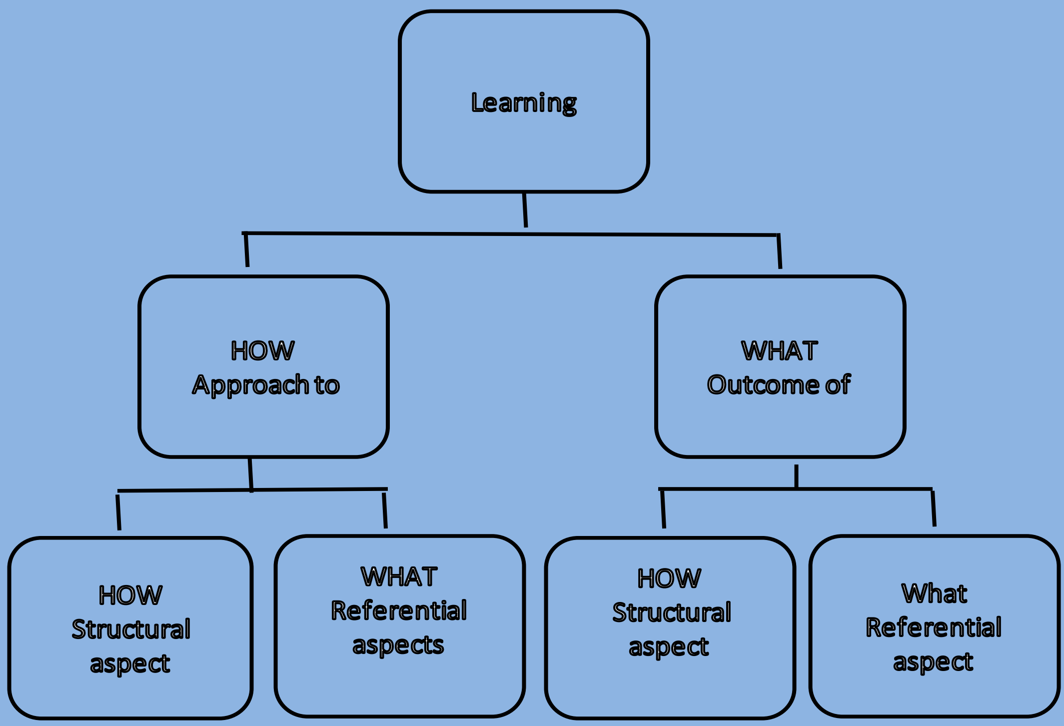
Figure 18: The what/how framework



Source: Adapted from Marton & Booth (1997: 85)

However, Irvin (2006) observes that there are some different understandings and ways of employing the ‘what’ and ‘how’ aspects because of the ambiguity of earlier publications. Some researchers including Reid and Petocz (2004) consider the ‘what’ to be identical to the referential aspect and the ‘how’ to be the same as the structural aspect. The underpinning can be found in Marton’s (1988: 66) early analysis; in which it was stated that “the outcome represents the 'what' aspect of learning and the approach represents the 'how' aspect”. This argument is illustrated in Figure 19 below:

Figure 19: Logical structure of some categories used to describe learning from an experiential perspective



Source: Adapted from Marton (1988: 66)

Irvin (2006: 112) also notes that although “most authors suggest that the ‘what’ aspect corresponds to the meaning or object of the phenomenon, what the ‘how’ aspect corresponds to remains unclear”. The second level of ‘what’ and ‘how’, that is, the ‘act’, ‘direct object’ and ‘indirect object’, is also problematic. For instance, the indirect object can be interpreted as either the quality of the act or what the act of learning aims for (Marton and Booth, 1997). In conclusion, the ambiguity of the framework has resulted in numerous different interpretations (Irvin, 2006); thus, researchers have to clarify and tailor the analytical tool to fit their own studies.

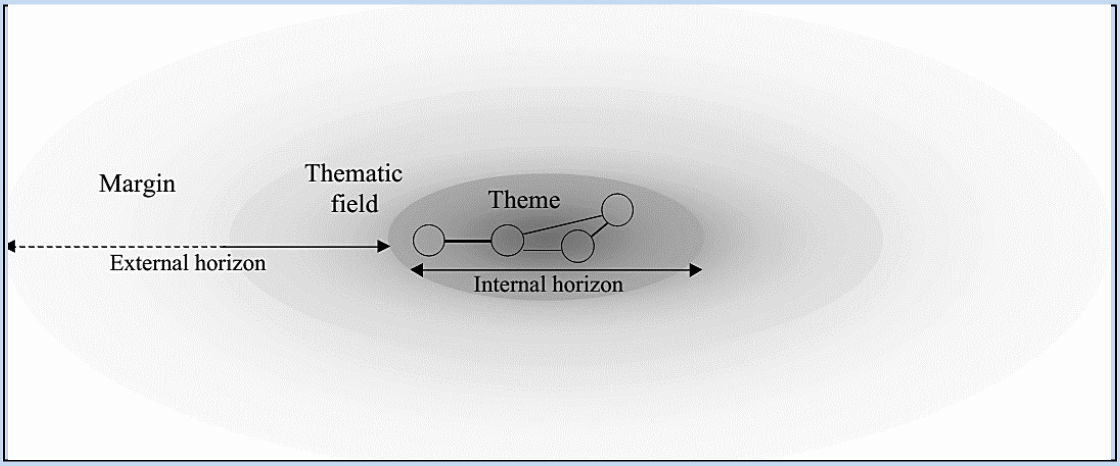
3.2.5.2 The referential/structural framework

The identification of referential and structural aspects (Marton, 1988) is a notable change that can be seen as the further development of the what/how framework (Harris, 2011). It was the result of an exploration of the conceptions of learning by Marton (1988), who created this new analytical tool and related it to Pramling's (1983) dichotomy of 'what' and 'how' aspects.

The referential aspect of a phenomenographic analysis captures the global meaning of the phenomenon. The structural aspect is composed of an internal horizon and an external horizon. According to Cope (2004) and Gurwitsch (1964), structure of awareness is the theoretical foundation for the internal/external horizon division. Marton (2000) and Marton et al., (2004) deem that awareness is used interchangeably with consciousness, which means "the totality of a person's simultaneous experiences" (Marton, 2000: 109), or "the totality of a person's. Essentially awareness is layered, because "whenever people attend to something, they discern certain aspects of it, and by doing so pay more attention to some things and less attention or none at all to other things" (Marton et al., 2004: 19).

In phenomenography, Gurwitsch's (1964) notions of theme, thematic field and margin are replaced by internal and external horizons (Cope, 2004); more specifically, the internal horizon refers to the theme, whereas the external horizon involves the thematic field and margin, as shown in the Figure 20 below:

Figure 20: A structure of awareness



Source: Adapted from Cope (2004: 11)

Cope and Prosser (2005: 350) describe the components, structure and relationship of the two horizons as follows:

"The internal horizon consists of the aspects of the phenomenon simultaneously present in the theme of awareness, and the relationships between these aspects and between the aspects and the phenomenon as a whole. The external horizon consists of the thematic field and the margin, that is, all aspects that are part of awareness at a particular instant but which are not thematic. The external horizon as an area of awareness forms the context in which the internal horizon sits. The boundary between the external and internal horizons delimits the phenomenon from its context".

It is noted that "a way of experiencing depends on how the parts of the phenomenon are distinguished and appear at the same time in the learner's focal awareness and the parts of it move into the background" (Ornek, 2008: 4). Drawing on Gurwitsch's (1964) notions, when experiencing something, it is normal that with some aspects coming into a person's focal awareness, other aspects recede to the background (Ornek, 2008).

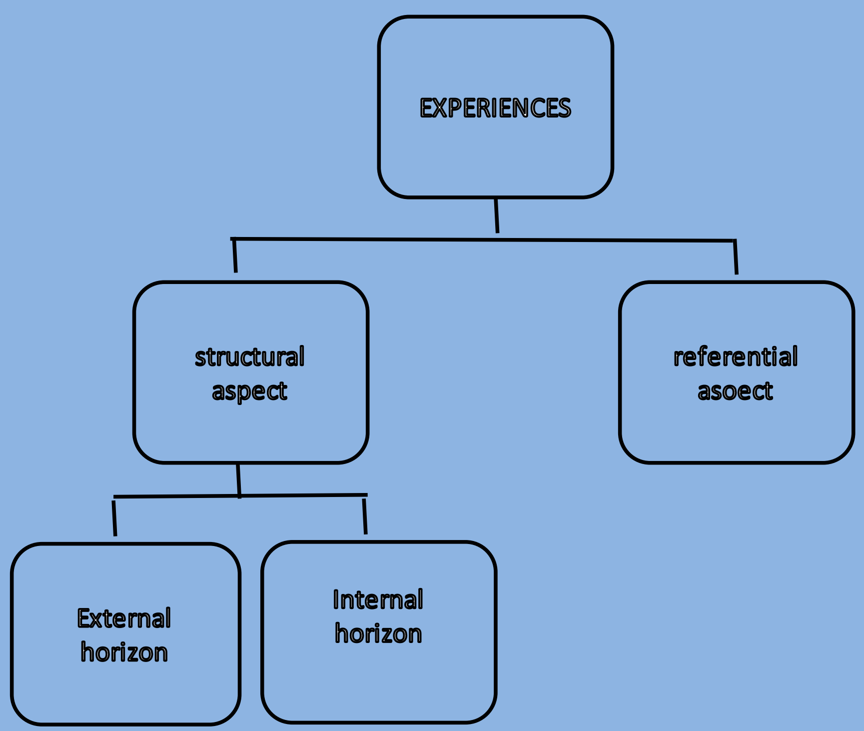
There is an intimate relationship between these two aspects; the “structural aspect is dialectically intertwined with the referential (or meaning) aspect of the conception” (Marton et al., 1993: 278). Distinctive conceptions would be different “both with regard to how the phenomenon and its component parts are delimited and related to each other (the structural aspect) and with regard to the global meaning of the phenomenon (the referential aspect)” (Marton et al., 1993: 278). Marton and Booth (1997: 87) contend that “structure presupposes meaning, and at the same time meaning presupposes structure”. When we experience something, the meaning and structure are dialectically intertwined and occur simultaneously (Marton and Booth, 1997).

Marton and Booth (1997: 87) draw on the example of a deer in the woods to better illustrate the meaning of structural and referential aspects; “to elaborate first on what we mean by structural aspect, we need to point out that to experience something in a particular way, not only do we have to discern it from its context, as a deer in the woods, but we also have to discern its parts, the way they relate to each other, and the way they relate to the whole. Therefore, on seeing the deer in the woods, in seeing its contours we also see parts of its body, its head, its antlers, its forequarters, and so on, and their relationships in terms of stance. The structural aspect of a way of experiencing something is thus twofold: discernment of the whole from the context on the one hand and discernment of the parts and their relationships within the whole on the other. Moreover, intimately intertwined with the structural aspect of the experience is the referential aspect, the meaning. In seeing the parts and the whole of the deer and the relationships between them, what could be seen, is the stance-relaxed and unaware of the presence or alert to some sound unheard by the observer, therefore, this could be discerned as a further degree of meaning".

Using an example of a deer in the woods, Marton and Booth (1997: 87) also explain the two categories of horizons; "the external horizon of coming on the deer in the woods extends from the immediate boundary of the experience, represented by the dark forest against which the deer is discerned, through to all other contexts in which related occurrences have been experienced, for example, walks in the forest, deer in the zoo, nursery tales, reports of hunting incidents. The internal horizon comprises the deer itself, its parts, its stance, its structural presence".

This framework, which includes terms such as referential and structural aspects and internal and external horizons, is illustrated in Figure 21 below:

Figure 21: The unit of a science of experience, a way of experiencing something



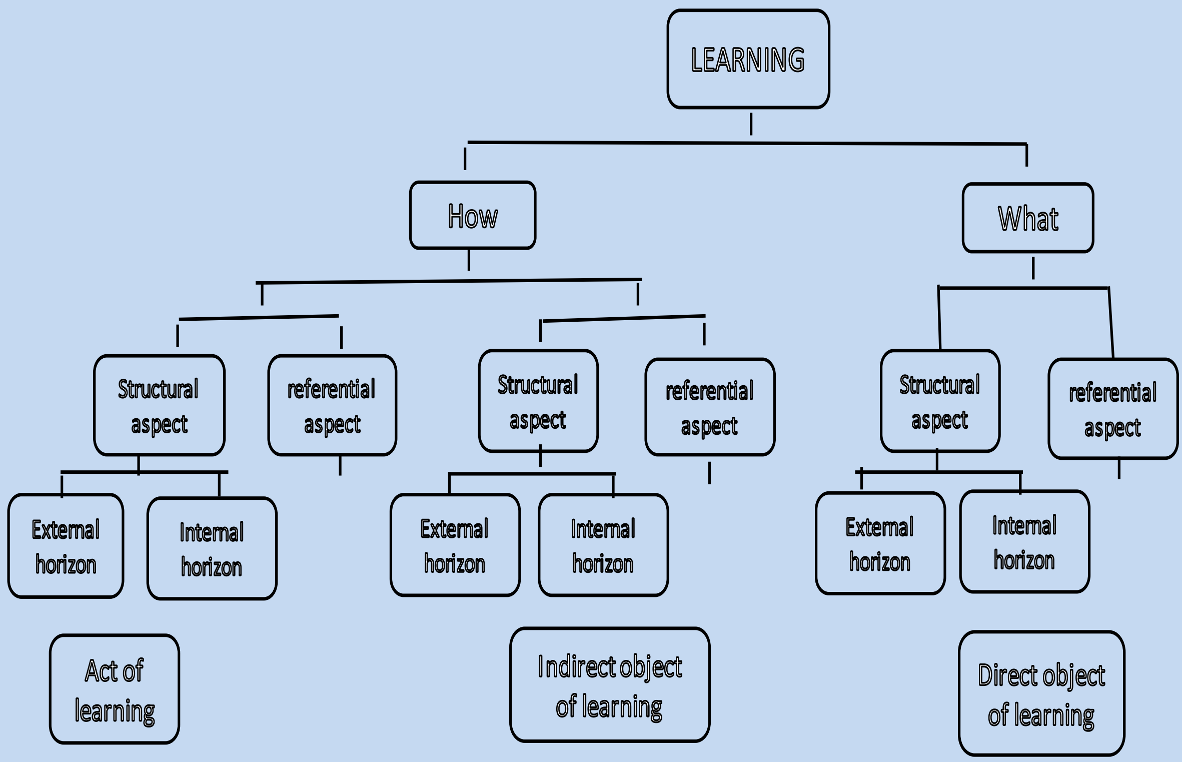
Source: Adapted from Marton and Booth (1997: 88)

Although pioneering phenomenographic researchers have endeavoured to elaborate on the referential and structural framework and its second level external and internal horizons, problems remain, and some key issues have yet to be further clarified. For instance, the boundary between this framework and the what/how framework is blurred, which may cause confusion when used in empirical studies. In addition, Irvin (2006: 120) particularly criticises the external horizon for a lack of clarification, and argues that the definition “of external and internal horizon” is vague, especially concerning the external horizon. The author claims it does not identify what the “whole” is or how the relationship between parts of the phenomenon and this whole differ from relationships within the internal horizon" (Irvin, 2006: 120).

3.2.5.3 The integrated framework

Every conception encompasses a ‘what’ (the object of learning) and ‘how’ (the way of going about learning) component, both of which have dialectically intertwined referential and structural aspects. The what/how framework deepens the analysis of the meaning conceptions contain, and the referential/structural framework can help to understand the structure of conceptions. They are both interdependent (Marton and Booth, 1997), hence Marton and Booth (1997) provided a synthesised model that integrates the two, as shown in Figure 22 below. The left-hand side of the diagram illustrates the 'how aspect of learning, whereas the right-hand side demonstrates the “way in which the direct object of learning is experienced” (Marton and Booth, 1997: 91).

Figure 22: A Synthesized model integrating What/How & Referential/Structural Framework



Source: Adapted from Marton & Booth (1997: 91)

This analytical model is indeed an effective tool for researchers who intend to conduct an in-depth analysis of experience, provided that the research is appropriately designed and the data collected is sufficiently rich and insightful (Harris, 2011). In Harris' (2011) view, the what/how and referential/structural frameworks should be better understood as analytical tools rather than theoretical support because of their weak link to theory. Given the comprehensiveness of the integrated analytical framework, it is not possible to explore any experiences according to all of the aspects that Marton and Booth (1997: 92) acknowledged. Harris (2011), suggested that when using this framework, the data collection and analysis should be more transparent so that other researchers can use it if they wish.

3.2.5.4 An analytical framework for this study

The aim of this present study is to uncover qualitatively varying experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The frameworks discussed in section 3.2.5 to 3.2.5.3 above, have been viewed to be effective and sound analytical tools in phenomenography.

Following the inconsistencies of the use of some aspects of the theoretical and analytical framework, the researcher chose to use the referential and structural framework because it is considered as relatively strong, convincing and rigorous. This decision is supported by Cope (2004: 15), who stated that “phenomenographic data analysis can be enlightened if the analysis is conducted using the analytical framework of a structure of awareness”.

The referential/structural framework has a clear relationship with the existing theory (Harris, 2011; Marton and Booth, 1997), and more precisely, Gurwitsch’s (1964) structure of awareness. The theoretical framework allows “researchers to examine the parts of the conception and the contexts in which it can exist” (Irvin, 2006: 286). The structure of awareness may also be utilised to “demonstrate the typical hierarchical, inclusive nature” of ways of experiencing (Cope, 2004: 15). Cope (2004) is confident that the employment of the structure of awareness, or more specifically the identification of key dimensions such as the internal and external horizons when analysing the description of the outcome space, could improve the validity of phenomenographic research for two reasons. The first reason is that “the structure indicates to readers that the researcher has developed the categories of description in a considered way” (Cope, 2004: 15). The second reason is that “the structure allows easier and better informed scrutiny of the results by readers” (Cope, 2004: 15).

3.3 Pilot Study

3.3.1 Pilot study: Method, Analysis and Lesson Learnt

Åkerlind (2005b) states that it is fairly important for novice phenomenographic researchers to conduct pilot interviews to examine and refine their interview skills. The researcher admits being a novice in conducting phenomenographic research. Also, Bell (1987: 65) contends that pilot testing is necessary to remove any problems with regards to clarity of question, objections to answering and any omissions. Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) state that one of the advantages of conducting a pilot study is that it might give advance warning about research protocols that could not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments could be inappropriate or too complicated. Bowden (2005: 19) states that pilot interviews should be undertaken with people “similar to the intended interview sample”. The researcher conducted the pilot study with one procurement practitioner, who has 10 years’ advanced experience of Procurement and Supply Management in the private and public sector, who is also professionally qualified as a Fellow of Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (FCIPS) and currently working at the strategic level in the public sector organization.

To inform the main investigation regarding the collection and analyses of data, the researcher conducted a pilot study. Interviewing is the most commonly used data collection method in phenomenographic research, but written text has also been utilised (Stenfors-Hayes et al., 2013). The researcher aimed to use the pilot study to explore the usefulness of two different methods of collecting data: interviews, and a written response to an open-ended scenario questionnaire. In this research study, a written response to an open-ended scenario questionnaire was undertaken after receiving the consent form and ethical approval for the study (see Appendix 8) and acceptance Email invitation plus Participant information from the chosen participant (see Appendix 9).

The researcher conducted an in-depth, semi-structured interview with the participant, lasting about 45 minutes. At the end of the interview with the participant for the pilot study, the researcher briefly discussed the format of the open-ended scenario questionnaire with the participant and received verbal confirmation from the participant of their consent to take part. The open-ended scenario questionnaire was constructed from a modified CIPS exam exemplar question papers, as shown in Appendix 10 and 11.

3.3.1.1 Pilot study data collection methods (Interview)

The researcher carried out an audio telephone conversation interview, recorded on the computer using a semi-structured schedule to provide focus for the interview and to help highlight any possible difficulties of using this particular method. Following the phenomenographic research approach, the researcher intended that the follow-up questions would largely depend on interviewees' responses, focusing on these to elicit meaning.

Transcribing interview data was also an area of concern for the researcher. Reviewing the transcript after transcribing it from the computer recording was found to be useful for the researcher as a novice phenomenographic researcher. This highlighted occasions when the researcher successfully used follow-up questions to obtain additional details, but also when the researcher missed opportunities to explore meanings more fully.

Reflection on these occasions was invaluable in recognising and developing the researcher's phenomenographic interview techniques. According to Åkerlind (2015), phenomenographic interviews can be difficult for the interviewee because the interviewees are encouraged to think deeply and reflect on their experiences. Using initial general conversation helps both interviewee and interviewer to settle into discussion (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000). A bracketing of personal assumption was practised by the researcher during the discussion, as this is essential criteria in phenomenography to ensure that the interviewee experiences are explored, although this ensures a difficult undertaking. The researcher was aware of the imbalance in relation to the interviewee being a stranger during the interview; therefore, the researcher had to be cautious and reflexive throughout. Ashworth and Lucas, 2000) suggested that a relationship can either be obscure or enabling the research process and based on interaction that took place. Also, the researcher was mindful that relationships may be different with different participants, so the researcher was aware of the importance to manage any potential risks to the participant in the study.

3.3.1.2 Pilot study data collection methods (Written scenario)

Crawford et al., (1994) and Bradbeer et al., (2004) used written data successfully in their phenomenographic studies as an alternative to interviews, even though the potential drawback is that there is no opportunity to probe more deeply into responses. Therefore, if used in isolation, the data collected from this method may be limited. However, the researcher used the pilot study to evaluate the usefulness of an additional data source, a written open-ended scenario questionnaire, as shown onas shown on Appendix 10 and 11. The researcher sent the open-ended scenario questionnaire to the participant after the pilot study interview and requested a response within one week so as to allow enough time for the participant to reply and to retain freshness of mind in terms of the topic in question. A follow-up for clarification of the responses was also requested and granted by the participant. This opportunity significantly improved the researcher's understanding of the participants' responses and proved a valuable addition to the data gained from the interview.

The researcher is mindful that the interview data is the empirical data for the study but is also concerned about the participants' concerns of meaning behind the researcher's semi-structured interview questions and their perceived appropriateness. The researcher believes that the CIPS scenario exemplar exam question papers cover all of the underlying characteristics of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

3.3.1.3 Pilot study data analysis and lesson learnt

Forester (2013) suggested that there are two broad and defined approaches to phenomenographic analysis: the Marton and the Åkerlind methods. The Marton method takes utterances or selected quotes, whilst the Åkerlind method mostly uses whole transcripts. It was necessary for the researcher, who is a novice in the use of phenomenographic research analysis, to be able to decide in advance which method to use. The pilot study enabled the researcher to make such a decision

As a lesson learned, the researcher found that aspects of the two methods were useful, in contrast with the assertion of Forester (2013). Also, the researcher found making notes on the transcripts, even if using an Excel spreadsheet during the iteration process, to be useful, as suggested by Bowden (2009). However, this contradicts the suggestion made by Åkerlind et al., (2005). The researcher found the process of going forward and backwards within the selected quotes useful because it helps to ensure that the researcher understood the meanings. The pilot study also helped to experience the time-consuming aspects of transcription.

Overall, the pilot study process allowed the researcher to understand the time-consumption involved with the study at hand, to acquire experience in communicating with participants so as to highlight the researcher’s position and need for reflexivity and to improve interview skills. In addition, the pilot study process enabled the researcher to refine data collection methods and trial the analytical framework, hence enabling the researcher to revise the research plan, eliminating wasteful data collection and increasing the rigour of the research.

In addition to Bowden's (2005) suggestion that it is necessary to conduct pilot interviews, the researcher also believes that it may be useful for researchers in the field of PSM, in the discipline of CM and SS and concept of competency and competencies to use past CIPS question papers which utilise scenario-based questions as an additional method of data collection. Doing this provides an additional insight into how practitioners are thinking and enables the tailoring of follow-up questions and the refinement of interview questions, which may prove valuable. Conversely, the researcher acknowledges that this method may be based on particular point-in-time responses and since “PSM disciplines are highly complex and dynamic” in nature (Bals et al., 2019: 2), it may be considered inappropriate as a method for capturing rich data. However, overall, it can be contended that doing so adds value in other ways such as exposing the respondent’s composition of thoughts and comprehension of meaning and mind-set.

Having described the pilot study, the researcher will now begin to provide details of the main methodological procedure involved in the study.

3.4 Methodological procedure

3.4.1 Sampling

The selection of a sampling strategy depends on the focus of inquiry. In this research study, the sample used for the interviews was purposive in design for identifying participants. According to Silverman (2013), this constitutes a non-random sample to which participants are specially sought out.

Marton and Booth (1997: 125) state that the phenomenographic study “always derives its description from a smallish number of people chosen from a particular population”. Sandberg (2000: 13) suggests that the number of different ways a phenomenon is experienced reaches saturation after about twenty interviews.

For this present study, a total of 10 procurement managers (PMs) in English local government (ELG) were invited to participate. According to Bowden (2005), this is a reasonable number from which to derive various experiences. In addition, Bowden (2005) states that since most of the conversations lasted for around 30 to 50 minutes, the data would not be difficult to manage. Patton (2002: 230) states that although a limited numbers of participants are required for a phenomenographic study, this does not mean that the researcher could “choose them at will. Rather, they should be chosen purposefully”.

The objective of phenomenographic research lies in uncovering the different ways of experiencing a phenomenon as variously as possible; therefore, the selection of the participants should adhere to this principle. As a strategy of purposive sampling, it is often employed by researchers who intend to study the way in which a phenomenon is experienced by different individuals (Patton, 2002). The selection of participants for this study was based on several criteria. Firstly, the ELG organisation for whom the PMs work for must have large enough procurement expenditure to warrant the need to leverage their procurement spending power, and must have fully adopted and implemented CM and SS processes as a business tool for their procurement practice, as well as having some degree of maturity in CM and SS procurement practice (greater than 3 years' experience). Secondly, the purposive selected PMs (interviewees) in the ELG organisations must have exposure to CM and SS practice both in the commercial and public sector environment. Thirdly, the interviewees must have more than 3 years' experience in the practice of CM and SS processes, be working at the strategic level in the organisation, and be professionally qualified (as a Member or Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (MCIPS or FCIPS). The researcher was mindful that there could be difficulty in locating participants who meet these specific requirements because the adoption of CM and SS proceeses in the public sector including within ELG commenced just over a decade ago, and there are a limited number of ELG organisations big enough financially, who had adopted CM and SS process fully (Murray, 2009).

A total of 8 male and 2 female procurement managers in ELG participated in the interviews, as shown in Table 21 below:

Table 22: Details of Participants in research study

	Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Participants	DG	EL	IR	SS	CW	DW	MP	LR	JT	CB
Industry sector (Public sector) Local Government Council positions	Head of Strategic Procurement (commercial & change)	x									
	Head of Procurement (Programmes & Projects)							x			
	Head of Strategic Procurement (Commercial)		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
	Commercial Director (Procurement)										x
Strategic area of specialty (Category management & Strategic Sourcing)	Social & People / Environment / Corporate	x	x					x			
	Environment (Construction & Special Project)			x							
	Social Care / People / Professional services				x						
	Places / Adults / Children & Professional services					x					
	Business / Public Health services						x		x		
	Environment / Transport & Facilities Management									x	
Stakeholder Group	Industry / Government / University / Professionals/ NGO/ Other Public sectors	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Type of Clients	Public / Private / P&P	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Professional Qualifications	MCIPS	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
	FCIPS						x				x
	Other: BSc		x						x		x
	Other: LLM									x	
	Other: LLB							x			
	Other: BA	x		x	x	x	x				
Participants Years of Experiences in Category Management & Strategic Sourcing practice	> 3 years	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
	> 10 years						x				x
Gender	Male	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x
	Female		x		x						

3.4.2 Data Collection

3.4.2.1 Phenomenographic semi-structured interviews

Despite there being numerous data collection techniques, such as open-ended questions or written responses (Bruce, 1996; Tight, 2016), observation (Patrick, 2000) and group interviews, Marton (1986) asserts that interviewing is said to be the "primary method of phenomenographic data collection" Marton (1986: 42).

Semi-structured interviews can be open, because “while a structure might be planned in advance, so as to approach the phenomenon in question from a variety of interesting perspectives, the interviewer can follow unexpected lines of reasoning that can lead to fruitful new reflections” (Booth, 1997: 138). Also, as stated by Booth 1997: 138), a “particular line of discussion should be followed until they are exhausted and the two parties have come to a mutual understanding”.

The openness of phenomenographic interviews means that a set of questions should be prepared before undertaking the interviews. Those questions can only be viewed as a guide rather than a constraint during conversations. One of the basic tenets of phenomenographic interviews lies in “allowing maximum freedom for the research participant to describe their experience” (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000: 300). Accordingly, the interview questions should be as general as possible rather than excessively specific, to facilitate the collection of abundant data. Some of the interviewees considered that the questions were so general that they had no idea where to begin, and in this situation, the researcher allowed them to choose their own topic of conversation without restriction as long as it related to experiences of competency in terms of CM and SS processes. The interview question for this study is displayed in Appendix 12 and 13

The depth of phenomenographic interviews lies in the fact that interviewers often bring participants to a meta-awareness level to ponder and rethink the phenomenon in question (Marton and Booth, 1997). The interviewees should be encouraged to fully express and reflect on the phenomenon of interest so that their sayings and actions are theirs alone, with a minimum level of intervention by the interviewer (Entwistle, 1997b).

According to Bowden (2005: 18), phenomenographic interviews generally contain the following three categories of questions;

(1) Neutral questions aimed at getting the interviewee to say more. Example: Can you tell me more about that? Could you explain that again using different words? Why did you say that?
(2) Specific questions that ask for more information about issues raised by the interviewee earlier in the interview. Example: You have talked about X and also about Y, but what do X and Y mean? Why did you talk about Y in that way?
(3) Specific questions that invite reflection by the interviewee about things they have said. Example: You said A, and then you said B; how do those two perspectives relate to each other?

The researcher put into practice some of the interview techniques developed by researchers such as: (Åkerlind, 2005b, Bowden, 1996 and 2005 and Sin, 2010). Most of the techniques were made in response to Säljö's (1997) query as to what extent the interview data could represent people's ways of experiencing or their conceptions. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the relationship between language and conception before illustrating the techniques.

3.4.2.2 Exploring conceptions through language

Revealing conceptions by means of language may sometimes seem to be dubious in phenomenography. Säljö (1997) proposes that the interview data actually represents a way of talking but not a way of experiencing, and what researchers analyse is the discourse rather than the conception. Admittedly, there might be a small number of PMs in ELG who are unable to describe their conceptions. As Säljö (1997) states, some interviewees could treat the conversation as a communicative obligation to be fulfilled, or they might provide answers in a way that enables them to save face when encountering tricky and abstract questions. Under such circumstances, it is reasonable to suppose that the PMs "utterances signify something else" (Säljö, 1997: 177) rather than a conception. The argument is insightful and phenomenographic researchers should be aware of this limitation.

However, the close relationship between conception and language is that conception is expressed by language while language shapes conception. Svensson (1997: 166) points out that "conceptions may be expressed in different forms of action but they are most accessible through language". Anderberg (2000: 92) contends that "conceptions are accessible through different symbols" and conceptions are a language that is "the most common kind of symbol in educational settings". Marton et al., (2004: 25) state that "language plays a central role in the construct of experience, and that it does not represent experience, as is widely perceived, but more importantly, it constitutes experience". If researchers distrust interviewees and treat their utterances as worthless, there would be no reason for collecting spoken data for phenomenographic research (Roisko, 2007). Furthermore, Elizabeth (2009) argues that even if the actual experience can be obtained, it will still be dependent on the researcher's personal observation. The interviewee's descriptions would be more trustworthy than the researcher's subjective understanding of the direct experience.

Every effort has been made to ensure that experiences of PMs in terms of competency in ELG, in relation to the use of CM and SS processes are expressed as faithfully as possible. Various interview strategies have been employed in this study to minimise Säljö's (1997) concerns. The interview questions were kept as open as possible to give the interviewees the maximum freedom and so as not to "lead participants to adopt a specific discourse" (Irvin, 2006: 102). The interviewer's intervention should be controlled to a minimum degree. Follow-up questions were frequently and regularly used to allow PMs in ELG to further clarify as well as exemplify their language and meaning (Barnard et al., 1999). The researcher also allowed the PMs in ELG to move on from difficult questions that interviewees were struggling to answer or may have felt uncomfortable in some way in answering at that moment in time, in order to eliminate the possibility of receiving unrepresentative or even disingenuous responses. The researcher attempted to create a comfortable and friendly environment to relax the participants and to create an atmosphere and setting of empathy and engagement (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000), to give the interviewees sufficient opportunity to ponder their competency experiences and all other related aspects (McKenzie, 2003).

3.4.2.3 Beginning the interview with indirect statement approach

The traditional way of using phenomenography to research competency is often by simply asking many straightforward questions, such as 'what do you mean by competency?' and 'how do you know when you have the competency to do something?'. Further insights can be gained by asking follow-up questions, for example, asking interviewees to expand or clarify their answers and provide an example. However, Bowden (2005) claims that there is another way to do this, which is to ask the participants to depict a recent experience related to the issue of interest. Bowden (2005) refers to research by Green (2005) as an example, when the interviewer asked the interviewees to describe their recent successful and less successful experiences of doing research in detail, in order to explore their conceptions of research.

Similarly, Marton et al., (1993: 281) posed reflective questions in a more natural way; if the PMs in ELG had been talking about what they felt is a competency from a particular part of their work activities, the researcher would go on to ask, 'When you say competency, what exactly do you mean by that word?".

Bowden's (2005) advice and Green's (2005) practice are both insightful and have aided this present study. Therefore, before beginning the interview and to pave the way for the subsequent conversation, the researcher prepared some 'warm-up' or contextual questions (Åkerlind, 2005c), such as 'Why was a particular product or service chosen to be managed through the category management process?' and 'How do you understand the goods or service chosen?' rather than directly and abruptly asking the interviewee to describe their experience and understanding of competency through the use of CM and SS processes. The researcher also encouraged the PMs in ELG to describe, recollect, analyse and reflect on their experiences with CM and SS processes, with the intention of supplementing the direct questions (competency for CM and SS processes) with indirect ones (contract project). During the interviews, the researcher found that PMs in ELG were better able to analyse their competency for CM and SS processes practice by talking about the experience of certain contract projects they had undertaken. More specifically, they were asked about some satisfactory and less satisfactory contract projects they had undertaken, and the contracting methods or project activities they found to be beneficial or not so beneficial. The basic assumption here was that contracting projects and competency in the context of CM and SS processes are closely related, and that competency achieved through the utilisation of CM and SS processes can be researched through contract projects. Although this may have played an unexpectedly positive role in the conversation, more emphasis was placed on exploring the competency experience due to the aim of the study.

Furthermore, the researcher found that carrying out the conversation in an indirect manner aided the creation of a relaxed atmosphere. The researcher often began each conversation with a contextual question, such as ‘why did you choose young people and children services procurement?’. The interviewees had no trouble describing how they entered ELG and specifically within procurement of young people and children services, providing details of their experience and analysing the reasons for selecting young people and children services procurement. This way of beginning the interview proved to be very effective in dispelling any initial anxiety felt by the interviewees.

3.4.2.4 ‘Bracketing’ researcher insights during interview

Since the aim of a phenomenographic study is to investigate the participants’ experience of a phenomenon, it is “essential for researchers to ‘bracket’ their own subjective insights, existing theories, and previous experience” (Dahlgren, 2005: 28). The nature of a phenomenographic interview is ‘non-directive’ in order to explore the phenomenon in question from a second-order perspective. This is essential when both collecting and analysing the data. In this sense, interviewers must not lead the interview in their favour. As Dahlgren (2005: 28) contends, interviewers should “avoid giving any clues about the desired direction which the process should lead”. However, it is imperative that the phenomenon under investigation must be “held central to the interviewer’s focus at all times” (Reed, 2006: 5). Sin (2010: 313-314) proposes four ways in which the interviewer’s personal influence can be minimised as much as possible;

- Attention should be given to the expressions used by interviewees and assumptions about the meanings should not be made but to seek clarification of the intended meaning, by asking follow-up questions.
- The researcher avoided introducing new terms into the conversation and refrained from correcting the interviewee with more accurate expressions.
- After asking a question, the researcher gave the interviewee the time and space to reflect and talk. The researcher consciously avoided showing facial expression of agreement or disagreement at the interviewees' responses but remained present and listened attentively and empathetically.
- The researcher also avoided asking leading questions.

The above suggestions proved to be practical and effective in the researcher's experience. The participants were allowed to take a leading position during the conversations, and the researcher acted as a listener who occasionally asked the participants to explain their meaning. The same thing might be explained differently among various PMs in ELG with distinctive intentions. The researcher deliberately did not correct some interviewees' mistakes because the researcher perceived that there was no absolute right or wrong answer and the researcher believed that the PMs in ELG were able to explain their position. The researcher replied to the interviewees with affirmative sounds to show that the researcher thought their expression made sense and encouraged them to say more. The apparently illogical or incorrect statements, as stated by Marton and Booth (1997), have the potential to provide an insight into the learner's way of experiencing learning.

3.4.2.5 Follow-up questions

According to Åkerlind (2005b), follow-up questions are important for acquiring some insightful opinions, ideas and thoughts. Their function is even more significant than that of the main questions in terms of eliciting potential meanings. The researcher had to pose such questions in an appropriate way and at an appropriate time. The researcher had to be mindful to keep an open mind and pay close attention to every participant’s response. In practice, the researcher found that Åkerlind’s (2005: 108) account of approaches “to raise follow-up questions” was very helpful.

The researcher's approach to probing typically involved selecting the word or phrase in the interviewee’s comments that seemed most significant or meaning-laden for them, and asking them to expand on that particular comment. Another way in which the researcher sought clarification of meaning was by asking the participants to compare or integrate something they had expressed earlier with what they had recently said. In these cases, the importance of ensuring that the researcher had fully explored what had already been said by the interviewee took priority over the possibility of biasing what they were going to say in the rest of the interview. Åkerlind’s (2005c) approach proved to be highly practical and effective in eliciting the interviewees’ underlying intentions. However, since the key to this approach is locating some seemingly meaning-laden statements, it may not always prove to be an easy task for the interviewer and could influence the quality of the data. The researcher believed that experienced interviewers could somehow become sensitive to their informants’ responses and thus produce quality follow-up probing questions at the appropriate times. The researcher also used the second approach, but less frequently, since the researcher thought it would be even more demanding because it required the researcher to have a good memory and the ability to relate different sections of the conversation. At this point, the probing should stop. When analysing the transcripts, the researcher perceived that most of the PMs had been able to express themselves sufficiently and clearly by the end of the investigation.

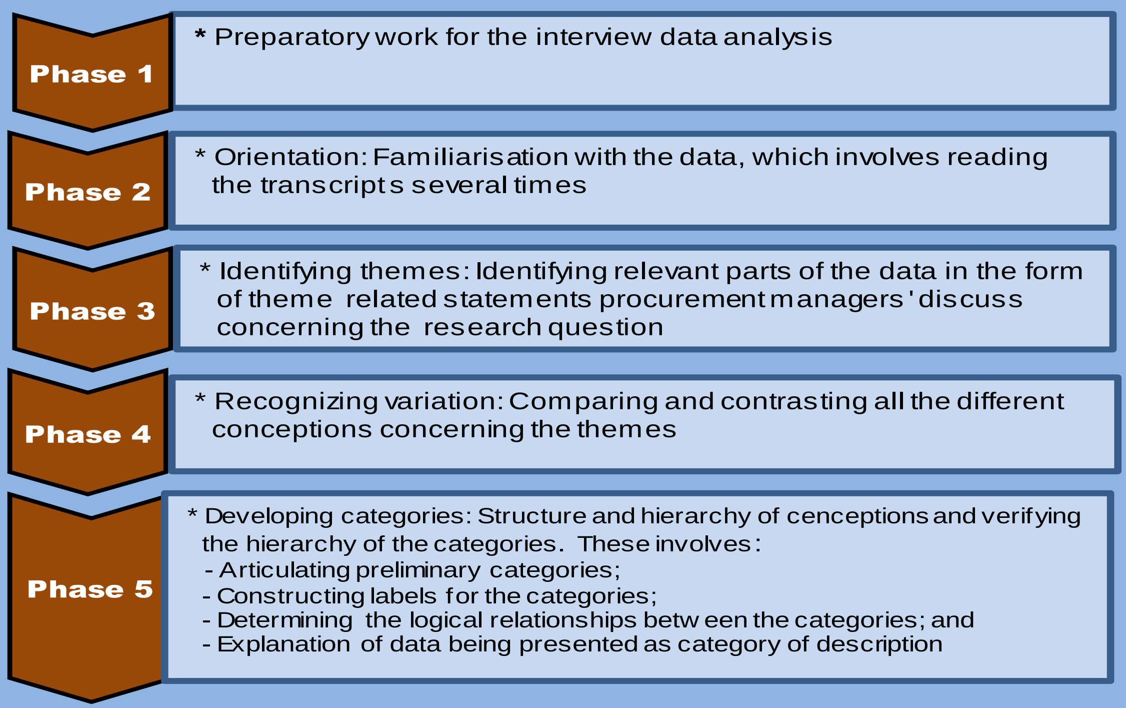
3.4.2.6 Creating a comfortable environment

Phenomenographic interviews contain a number of 'what' and 'why' questions, and the 'what' questions may be easier to answer than the 'why'; nevertheless, the 'why' questions play an essential role, because "participants' comments on why they engaged in described behaviour, or why they thought particular behaviour and opinions were important, were more significant in the search for meaning in the transcripts than were simple descriptions of behaviour and opinions" (Åkerlind, 2005c: 114). Given the importance of these questions, the researcher found it was really difficult for the participants to respond to them. They often needed a long time to think about them, or they replied, 'I do not know'. The continuous probing nature makes the phenomenographic interview more challenging and intimidating than other forms of interviews (Reed, 2006). Similarly, Åkerlind (2005c: 115) claims that phenomenographic "conversations are essentially uncomfortable and reflective".

3.5 Data analysis

An analysis of the collected data is addressed in this section. The central concern of a qualitative analysis is to assign meaning, structure and order to a set of data (Anfara and Brown, 2001). Although a number of researchers (Dahlgren and Fallsberg, 1991; Khan, 2014; Marton, 1986; Sjöström and Dahlgren, 2002) have proposed a general analytical process, the data collated by this present study was analysed in line with the selected referential/structural framework presented in section 3.2.5.4. The researcher chose this framework as it was deemed to be the most suitable, based on comparing several analytical frameworks. The phases in the data analysis process are depicted in Figure 23 below. The procedure will be explained and issues involved with performing phenomenographic data analysis will be expounded and clarified in the final section.

Figure 23: Phases of data analysis process



3.5.1 Data Analytical procedure for this study

The central concern of a typical phenomenographic study is to identify the qualitatively different experiences. In this sense, data analysis is a process from which such categories of description can be derived. Marton (1986: 42-43) explains the general process from the "finishing of the transcription to the formation of categories of description". In this research study, the researcher followed the steps of Marton's (1986) analytical procedure as described in the following sections.

3.5.1.1 Preparatory work for the interview data analysis

In preparing for the analysis work the researcher typed the interview transcripts on a word document (excerpt as shown in Appendix 14), and then later transferred to an Excel spreadsheet, line-by-line (excerpts as shown in Appendix 15).

3.5.1.2 Familiarization with the data

In order to become familiar with the data, all of the transcripts were read at least four times and each recording was listened to in its entirety at least twice. Re-reading the transcripts and listening repeatedly to the recordings of the interviews permitted the researcher to become intensely engaged with the data, and in so doing become closer to the participants. This immediately aided the data analysis process

3.5.1.3 Identifying relevant parts of the data

The researcher began the search for competency-related statements with an open mind. However, the researcher was concerned about how to judge whether they were relevant or irrelevant. The researcher followed suggested approaches by other researchers such as Sjöström and Dahlgren (2002) and Marton (1986). To help ameliorate this concern, Sjöström and Dahlgren (2002) suggested three indicators such as: evaluating the importance of elements in answers; paying attention to those statements that appeared frequently; finding specific positions as indicators; and making comparisons of aspects that are more significant than others. Additionally, Marton (1986: 42) suggested that “utterances found to be of interest for the questions being investigated are selected and marked” and also that the researcher should make “references to the questions posed in the interviews”. For instance, for this research study, the core question being asked that the transcript could reveal is about the qualitatively different ways in which competency is experienced by PMs in ELG, in terms of accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

The researcher underwent a manual selection of the relevant segments of the data within the primary documents, as suggested by Sjöström and Dahlgren (2002) and Marton (1986). Åkerlind (2005: 323) states that “the researcher as far as possible should avoid any pre-determined views or too rapid foreclosure in views, about the nature of the categories of description”. The selected parts of the data were then examined to identify themes and significant words. Sentences and extracts were underlined and labelled with one or more keywords, with interesting segments of text being emboldened, as shown in Appendix 16. According to Sjöström and Dahlgren (2002), this step in the procedure is called ‘open coding’ and described as coding anything that might be relevant from as many different perspectives, for example, a particular behaviour, incident or structure. The researcher developed a working analytical framework by first coding all of the transcripts so as to be used consistently in the second reading of the transcript as shown in Appendix 17. The working analytical framework was applied by indexing subsequent readings of the transcript using the existing categories and codes. Each code was assigned letters, for example ‘SS134-145’, to aid easy identification The data was ‘charted’ into the matrix and summarised as the initial categories of description as shown in the worked example in Appendix 18. By the month of June 2018, 238 different initial themes had been identified (excerpt as shown in Appendix 19), Two examples of quotes to illustrate themes identified are as follows:

"*I continue to understand the nature of how, why we spend money with these schools, what were the trigger points before a contract" SS26-28*

"*The more I recognise that for all the systems, processes, technology and resources, leadership are the critical attribute of successful procurement strategy" MP169-171*

3.5.1.4 Comparing extracts to find sources of variation or agreement and grouping similar segments of data

After the initial themes had been identified, the selected parts of the data were taken from the individual transcript and pooled, shifting attention from the individual to the meanings expressed by the group as a whole (excerpt as shown in Appendix 20). Therefore, each quote has two contexts in relation to how it has been interpreted; first the interview from which it was taken and second, the "pod of meanings" from which it belongs (Marton, 1986: 43), which represents all of the transcripts from the individual interviews combined (Marton, 1994). Once the data was pooled, the analysis continued with the identification of distinct ways of experiencing competency in relation to accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, by comparing extracts and searching for similarities and differences. The aim was to identify the referential and structural dimensions of the experiences of procurement managers in ELG, as shown in Appendix 21. The referential dimensions referred to the overall meaning and the structural dimensions referred to the experiences of PMs in ELG.

Although identifying the referential and structural dimensions forms two distinct stages in the process of analysis, Marton and Booth (1997: 87) assert that the two "dimensions occur at the same time when an individual experiences a phenomenon; structure presupposes meaning, and at the same time meaning presupposes structure".

Marton and Booth (1997: 87) also said that the two aspects, meaning and structure, are “dialectically intertwined" and occur "simultaneously when we experience something. In this study, in order to establish the essential meaning underlying the CoD, the researcher went through an iterative process of comparing and contrasting the interview data extracts, so as to identify differences. As the iterative process continued, the dimensions of variations became apparent. These dimensions of variations were aspects of the phenomenon of CM and SS processes that makes up the distinctive aspects between the emerging CoD.

At this stage of the analysis, the question being asked was: “what is the most appropriate way, on the basis of the data, to complete the statement underlining how the phenomenon was experienced” (Bruce 1997:105). As the distinct ways of experiencing competency in relation to accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes were identified, they were grouped on the “basis of the similarities and differences” (Marton, 1980: 43). In order to do this, it was necessary to have as complete an understanding as possible in terms of what had been said and what was meant. Identifying the structural dimensions involved exploring the participants’ layers of awareness, what they focused on; what remained in the background and what rested on the periphery.

The main question being asked at this stage of the analysis was: “what do the participants focus on, in order to experience?” (Bruce, 1997: 105), for example, competency in relation to accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The researcher integrated the data so as to identify characteristics of and differences between the data, thereby generating typologies emerging from the data. This is shown in Table 23 below:

Table 23: Number of Procurement Managers in ELG interview statement with varying conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes

Conception of Competency	Stakeholder Management	Socio-Technical Knowledge	Achievement Orientation	Total Line-by-line Statements
Number of PMs in ELG interview statements	410	1708	544	2662

As the structural dimensions of the ways of experiencing competency in relation to accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes were identified, they were entered into structure of awareness charts.

3.5.1.5 Articulating preliminary categories

During this process, the referential and structural dimensions of the experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes were brought together and a set of emergent categories of description were identified, as shown in Figure 24 below:

Figure 24: Emerging Categories of description

Category	Category Label	Category Label Description
Category One	Stakeholders Management	**Conception of competency for effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes is experienced, understood and accomplished as the ability to engage and manage relevant stakeholders who affect and or could be affected by organizations activities.** *"when dlivering Children and Adults services; I always say to them to do pre-procurement activity, that is the market testing, meet your suppliers, etc. and that should be the way. it should happen, it's very funny how people think it,*
Category Two	Socio-Technical Knowledge	**Conception of competency for effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes is the ability to take account of the interaction that exist technical (structural or non-structural), organizational, economics, political and social needs by thinking analytically, conceptually, planning, organizing, innovatively and solving problem and using tools.** *"One of the big thing you do need to be able to do in category management is to interpret management information, system analysis, articulation of data, separation of data to certain extent, what is going to be an external 'mix kid" DG256-258*
Category Three	Achievement Orientation	**Conception of competency for effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes is the ability to have a sense of urgency towards execution in change management, having initiative , leadership, making decision and communicating.** **"***I have always said, if they don't tick every box, then it's non-compliant and as a professional, you cannot give advice that is non-compliant, because then your integrity is lost, your professionalism is in-resolved and people don't trust you" MP449-451*

The variations between each of the categories were articulated and categories were grouped together into sets. Bruce (1997: 106) describes this analytical stage of research study as such: "due to the recursive nature of the analysis, draft CoD were actually constructed early in the process".

These were progressively revised as the noetic and neomatic elements of each conception and were classified through regular consultation with the transcripts. It is difficult to convey the intense nature of the process of revising the emerging CoD, as the data was scrutinised closely in order to refine the essential features of each category. In this section, it is only possible to give a brief outline of the evolution of the categories but nevertheless the evolution outlined creates an impression of the process undertaken

3.5.1.6 Constructing labels for the categories

An individual category of description (CoD) represents one way of experiencing the phenomenon. Constructing labels for the CoD was a crucial stage in the process of analysis as the label had to capture the essence of the ways in which the experiences of the research participants are understood.

Labels describe PMs in ELG based on their linguistic expression and the researcher's interpretation of their descriptions of the phenomenon. The researcher's interpretation of descriptions provided by participants was further aided by literature using the McClelland/McBer Competency Model as reproduced by Raven and Stephenson (2001) and Big-Five Personality Traits (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Labels were only attached to CoD when the researcher was content that the data had been condensed to its core meaning.

3.5.1.7 Determining the logical relationships between the categories

When the CoD had been labelled, attention moved to the OS (a structural framework housing the CoD). The ultimate aim of phenomenography is an “exploration of the relationships between the obtained CoD and the subsequent derivation of a structural model of the perceptions exhibited by the participants in the study” (Francis, 1996: 45).

The logical relationships between the categories of description, based on the referential and structural aspects of the phenomenon, are described in the outcome space (OS). These logical relationships were determined as a result of scrutinising the meaning structure and awareness structure for each category.

The principle underlying the phenomenographic research approach is that the "different CoD are logically related" to one another, frequently in a "hierarchical fashion" as asserted by Marton and Booth (1997: 125) and Barnard et al., (1999: 220). However, they assert that "the logical relationship between conceptions is portrayed in the outcome space in numerous ways depending on the understanding". At the outset of this present research study, it was not known how the CoD would be related. As data analysis proceeded, the logical relationship between the different CoD in the OS was found to be hierarchically inclusive.

At the end of the process of analysis, an outcomr was constructed that illustrated the structure of the qualitative variations in the experiences of PMs in ELG in relation to competency and the accomplishment of effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

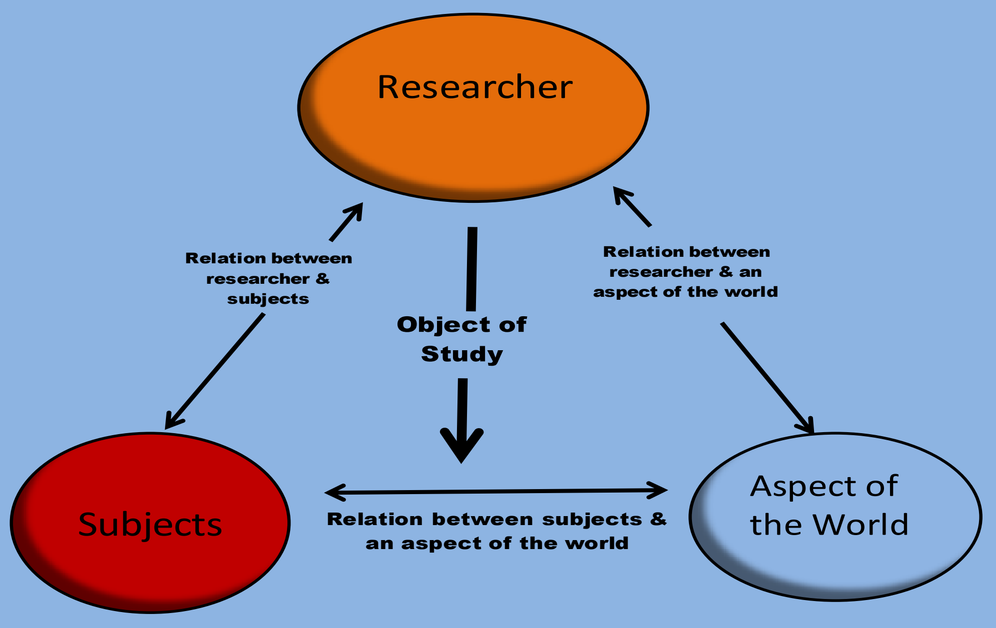
3.5.1.8 Explanation of data being presented as category of description (CoD)

Entwistle (1997:132) argue that, “the meaning resides in the essence of the comments from which the CoD have been constituted” and that in order to ensure comprehensiveness and fairness, the following are included throughout the chapter. These are:

- Quotation from the participants;
- Extracts of interview; and
- Words of the participants are woven into text

The meaning structure describes the essential parts of the subject-object relation as shown in Figure 25 below, which makes up the way of experiencing, as described in the CoD. The structural component, or in other words what the subject focused on when experiencing each phenomenon, is conveyed in the structure of awareness.

Figure 25: Focus of Phenomenographic Research



Source: Adapted from Mann,L., Alba, G,D., and Radcliffe, D. (2007)

The description of each category is presented in the following way:

- Category label;
- The diagrammatic representation of the subject-object relationship at the beginning of each category description (Bruce, 2000: 5-6);
- Description and focal point of each way of experiencing;
- The structure of awareness; and
- The meaning structure, which establishes "the essential parts of the meaning" being attributed to the qualitatively differing experiences of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes in each CoD, and "also specify how these parts are combined to form a whole" (Bruce, 1997: 112). In each description, the essential parts of the meaning are provided at the beginning and then each is looked at in turn.

The internal relationship is represented as the subject-object relation. In this study, the relationship is between the subject (PMs in ELG) and object (competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes), which makes up the way of experiencing, as described in each of the three categories. This 'way of experiencing' is made known through a referential component (overall meaning of varying experiences) and a structural component (what the subject focused on when experiencing).

According to Marton and Booth (1997: 87), the "referential and structural components are an intertwined part of the whole". The referential components (what is being experienced) of each phenomenon is conveyed in the CoD label and is the diagrammatic representation of the subject-object relationship at the beginning of each CoD.

According to Marton and Booth (1997), CoD describes one way of experiencing competency in terms of accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The names given to the categories are important as they are named according to the key features that PMs in ELG have discerned and keep within their focal awareness. According to Marton and Both (1997), the structure of awareness is described on three levels. These are:

- Focal points (what an individual focuses on);
- Second level of awareness (the level of awareness is receding); and
- Peripheral awareness (the least intense level of awareness)

Laurillard (1993: 36) argues that there are three types of OS. These are:

- “An inclusive, hierarchical OS in which a more sophisticated perception will logically include previous, or lower, ones”;
- “An OS in which the different perceptions are not related to each other but to the history of participants' experience of the phenomenon”; and
- “An OS which defines a development progression, where each successive perception, in a manner similar to the progression defined for scientific theories, has more explanatory powers than others, and therefore, may be seen as ‘better’”.

The phenomenal aspects differentiating the categories are known as dimensions of variation. They comprise the critical aspects for expanding a more sophisticated or complete level of understanding. It should be noted that this categorisation represents collective conceptions of competency rather than individual conceptions of competency for effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. Consideration is given to how *essential parts* of the meaning structure demonstrate the variation between each of the ways in which competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is experienced. The *essential parts* are presented in emboldened text. Through looking at the *essential parts* it can be observed that they are nested in a hierarchical relationship, expanding from the least understanding to the most comprehensive understanding between the categories. Åkerlind (2005a: 17-19), states that “due to the structural hierarchy of inclusiveness, some conceptions can be seen as more complete than other categories”. Arrows indicate the structural nature of the outcome space as nested within a hierarchy of inclusiveness.

3.6 Rigour of the research

Sandberg (1997: 207-208), argues that “reliability and validity are concerned with an ‘external’ process, whereas, phenomenographic research is concerned with an ‘internal’ process”. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to justify qualitative research against positivist criteria of reliability and validity in a quantitative sense (Silverman 2003: 175-188). Nevertheless, Åkerlind (2005: 330) states that “qualitative researchers are still expected to address issues of the validity and reliability of their research and assert they should be addressed in relation to the assumptions guiding the nature of the research”.

The validity and reliability of the present research study were both addressed in accordance with the assumptions guiding a phenomenographic approach. Sandberg (2000: 14) states that “there are three criteria to justify the researcher’s interpretation in phenomenographic studies". They are:

- Communicative validity;
- Pragmatic validity; and
- Reliability

Cope (2002) asserts that the identification of the structure of awareness will strengthen phenomenographic data analysis and hence, the validity of the results. The justification of the researcher's interpretations in the present study is discussed in the terms of their criteria.

3.6.1 Communicative validity

Communicative validity was addressed by testing knowledge produced by means of communication throughout the research process. Sandberg (2000: 14), proposed three stages in the phenomenographic process, where communicative validity is relevant:

- Within the interview communicating with the subjects;
- In the analysis process communicating with the text;
- In communicating the results to other researchers and professionals

3.6.1.1 Communicative validity within the interviews: communicating with the subjects

Communicative validity was established through ongoing dialogue between the researcher and the participants (Sandberg, 2000: 14). Prior to the interviews, and again at the start of the interviews, participants were informed that the research was interested in how the experience of the participants in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is understood, and were assured that there were no right or wrong answers with regards to their responses. This was important in terms of developing a common understanding between the participants and the researcher about what was discussed in the interview.

During the interviews, communicative validity was established by generating data through dialogue as recommended by Sandberg (2000:14). This allowed the researcher to check that the responses of participants were being correctly interpreted. Data was collected through the use of interviews, which employed a small set of open-ended questions to stimulate discussion. The use of open-ended questions encouraged an identification and description of the experiences of PMs in ELG and limited the possibility of the interview being biased according to the researcher's experience of the phenomenon. To increase the validity of the data, the researcher repeated statements made by the participants to give them the opportunity to express their reflective thoughts and to ensure that the researcher had understood their answers. Probing questions were also used as a means to stimulate the elaboration and clarification of the description of the experiences of the participants.

3.6.1.2 Communicative validity in the analysis process: communicating with the text

According to Sandberg (2000: 14), the quality of the research "depends on how the researcher interacts with the data". The second stage of the phenomenographic process whereby communicative validity is relevant is during the analysis process. In data analysis, the main way of controlling the researcher's interpretations was through a strict adherence to the data.

To ensure that the descriptions were faithful to the text meant retaining the context of all of the sections of the data that were selected for consideration and constantly going back to the data as whole and reading the participants' statements in context. It should be noted that in contrast to some qualitative research methodological paradigms, phenomenographic researchers do not seek communicative validity from participants, because in phenomenographic research, "interpretations are made on a collective basis and are based on the interview as a holistic group and not as individual interviews" (Francis, 1996: 41). In addition, in accordance with the ontological assumptions guiding phenomenographic research, "an individual's experience of a phenomenon is context specific and therefore, if consulted at another point in time, participants may not necessarily experience the same understanding of the phenomenon as they did when interviewed" (Åkerlind, 2005: 330-331).

3.6.1.3 Communicative validity in communicating the results to other researchers and professionals

Marton (1997: 100) stipulated that “once the outcome space of a phenomenon has been revealed, it should be communicated in such a way that other researchers could recognise instances of the different ways of experiencing the phenomenon in question”. The third stage in the phenomenographic process, where communicative validity is relevant, involves communicating the findings to other researchers and professionals (Sandberg, 2005: 55).

Throughout the research process, checks were made with the researcher’s academic supervisors regarding research methods and interpretations. The evolving findings were presented and discussed at a Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) special event conference, with other PMs in public and commercial sectors and with the academic research community over the Internet (Research Gate and Academia). These measures were taken to ensure that the “research methods and final interpretations were regarded as appropriate by the research community” (Åkerlind, 2005: 330). Feedback from researchers and educators from the International Institute of Advanced Purchasing and Supply (IIAPS), was assumed to have strengthened the communicative validity.

3.6.1.4 Pragmatic validity

Pragmatic validity refers to the extent to which the outcomes of the research are seen as useful. The findings from the present study provide an insight into the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, and provide a framework to guide developments in procurement and supply management (PSM) practice.

3.6.1.5 Reliability

Reliability refers to the replicability of results. In terms of phenomenographic research, it is envisaged that an identical outcome space would be replicated by another researcher handling the same data. According to the assumptions guiding phenomenographic research, individuals experience the world in different ways so the assumption is that researchers would experience the variation in participants' experiences of the phenomenon in different ways, therefore, “reliability is neither consistent with the relational nature of the constitution of categories nor the dynamic nature of awareness” (Sandberg, 1997: 207-208).

According to Marton (1986:35), there are “two issues relating to the demand for replicability of results”. These issues are about how the presentation was given by the researcher.

Firstly the issues are:

- Would other researchers establish the same categories of description, if the study was repeated in a different context?
- Would other researchers identify the same conceptions as categorised by the original researcher?

Inter-judge reliability was criticised by Sandberg (1997: 205). Sandberg (1997) argues that inter-judge reliability is inconsistent with the relational nature of phenomenographic research and advocates the use of a procedure called interpretive awareness.

Interpretative awareness means “to acknowledge and explicitly deal with our subjectivity throughout the research process instead of overlooking it” (Sandberg, 1997: 209). In this present study, interpretative awareness was used to check and control the quality and consistency of the researcher’s interpretation process. The justification follows on from Sandberg's (1997: 209) argument that interpretative awareness is “consistent with the epistemology of intentionality that underpins the research approach”. Sandberg (1997: 137) stipulates that in order to establish the reliability of their interpretation, “researchers must show how they dealt with their intentional relations to the individual’s conceptions being studied; they must demonstrate how they have controlled and checked their interpretations throughout the research process”. The use of a phenomenographic epoch as a strategy for achieving interpretative awareness is suggested by Sandberg (2005: 59), with the aim of ensuring that researchers withhold all presupposition. It is acknowledged, however, that a researcher cannot bracket all previous experiences.

To maintain interpretative awareness, Sandberg (1997: 209-210) suggests that the following criteria are met:

- suspension of the researcher's theories and biases;
- accurate description of the individuals conception rather than providing explanation;
- equal importance paid to all aspects of individual experience;
- search for structure of meaning by focusing on the relationship between the ‘what’ and ‘how’ aspects of the experience.

Throughout this research, all of the aforementioned criteria were met in order to ensure that interpretation awareness was achieved.

3.6.1.6 Suspension of researcher's theories and biases

Reliability as interpretative awareness means acknowledging research bias and explaining how it is dealt with in the study. This was implemented throughout the data collection and analysis, through a process of bracketing prior knowledge of the experiences of conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

3.6.1.7 Accurate description of the individual's conception rather than providing explanation

The researcher described what constitutes the phenomenon of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, rather than explaining why it appears as it does. Interview questions directed the participants to focus on what the phenomenon meant to them. The use of quotes to provide evidence in support of the descriptions was another strategy used to ensure that analysis was faithful to the text.

3.6.1.8 Equal importance paid to all aspects of individual experiences

The researcher aimed to treat all aspects of the participants' experience equally in both the data collection and analysis stage of the phenomenographic research process. During the interviews, each statement made by a participant was considered worthy of follow up. In the data analysis stage of the research process, no statement was dismissed; all were considered equally.

3.6.1.9 Search for the basic meaning structure of the experience under investigation

The researcher searched for the basic structure of meaning. This was achieved by focusing on the relationship between the 'what' and 'how' aspects of the experience and repeatedly checking the variety of interpretations. The data was read until the meaning structure of the experience was stabilised, as recommended by Sandberg (2005: 61).

3.6.2 Ensuring validity and reliability: Structure of awareness

According to Cope (2002), identification of the structure of awareness will strengthen phenomenographic data analysis and hence, the validity of the results. For instance, Cope (2002) suggests that interview questions and the analysis of data during the interview can be based on the analytical framework of a structure of awareness.

As such, the researcher is more likely to focus on aspects of a structure of awareness and less likely to focus on their own prior knowledge of the phenomenon being investigated. Therefore, the structure of the interviewing "can be justified as minimizing the influence of the interviewer's prior knowledge of the phenomenon" (Cope, 2002: 5-18).

3.7 Conclusion for Chapter Three

In the introduction of this chapter, we pointed to the issues of the research methodology used in the present study: the research strategy, the approach for understanding the methodology such as: theoretical perspectives, justification for the choice of phenomenographic approach, philosophical underpinning, research design and implications for data collection, data analysis, and the rigour of the research. It was argued that in order to “understand individual interpretations of the world” (Cohen et al., 2000: 20), an interpretative approach such as phenomenography should be adopted as an appropriate and alternative approach to the prevalent positivist, rationalistic approaches.

A detailed discussion of the methodology is warranted because of the nature of a phenomenographic research approach and the possible critique from some literature based on the issue of a lack of rigour.

The use of a phenomenographic approach as a research methodology in this present study, is seen as one way to contribute to an understanding of the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of the phenomenon of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, and as an example of researching procurement and supply management practice phenomena.

The thread that runs through the phenomenographic movement is an interest in variation. Phenomenography sets out to reveal the different ways in which people experience the same phenomena, in the same situation. Categories of description and outcome space are instrumental in characterising the experience of people in reality.

The variation in the different ways of experiencing something is described by the researcher. This aspect of phenomenographic approach represents a major area of concern for researchers, despite the fact that one of the core features of phenomenography is the idea of ‘bracketing’ the researcher’s knowledge in order to enable the emergence of knowledge from the data obtained.

Researchers are aware of the suggestion made by Sandberg (1997: 209) of the need of “interpretative awareness” as a means to maintain reliability of the study, however, the researcher will argue that the degree of consciousness from an individual perspective for interpretative awareness goes against the ‘grain’ of the research interest of phenomenography, which is said to be variation. The solution of ‘bracketing’ as suggested by Sandberg (1997: 209) is not enough to ameliorate the effect of the researcher’s interpretative awareness for the construction of the category of description that is inherent in phenomenographic outcomes.

The researcher will argue that a combination of several perspectives on interpretative awareness is necessary in order to underpin reliability. Although phenomenographic researchers welcomed the issue of a phenomenographic methodological orientation, in which there has been a shift in emphasis from a methodological orientation to theoretical concerns, Pang, (2003: 154) argues for the application of the ‘theory of variation’, in order to advance the ontologically significant ways of experiencing something, which enables a theoretical base for studying the qualitatively different ways of experiencing various phenomena in a dynamic manner.

This shift, the researcher argued, will greatly enhance what the researcher would describe as the ‘interpretative awareness validity’ of utilising a phenomenographic approach. Overall, in the context of the present research study, which aims to investigate the experience of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, which inhabits such phenomenon that could be abstract such as: individual capabilities or concrete physical objects such as regulatory, policy, strategic and contract documents or technology, the researcher will argue that a phenomenographic approach has the potential to yield insight into variation. This in turn makes it possible to develop a greater understanding of the phenomenon as it is experienced and to draw upon those experiences in order to improve and enhance effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS – DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings in response to the first research question: "What are the qualitatively different experiences of procurement managers in English local government in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use category management and strategic sourcing processes?" A total of three conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes are found, and each of them are described and evidenced by the interviewees' utterances and excerpts. Each conception is further interpreted in relation to the referential/structural framework as presented in Chapter 3. The presentation and interpretation of the results in this chapter provides empirical evidence. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss the interpretation of the findings, based on the detailed account of the categories of description (CoD) and outcome space (OS), and also in relation to what is known within the extant literature. The implications and limitations of the findings will also be discussed.

4.2 Category of description (CoD) and (OS) findings

Three categories of description (CoD) were identified. These are described as: (1) stakeholder management, (2) socio-technical knowledge, and (3) achievement orientation (as summarised in Table 24 below). Within each conception, it is possible to distinguish several key attributes of competency. More specifically, each conception is characterized by a specific structure of attributes as experiences of PMs in ELG. Thus, a particular way of conceiving the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes delimits certain attributes as key and organised into a distinctive structure of competency, based on a meaning structure and structure of awareness. This is summarised in Tables 24 and 25 and Figure 26 below. Taken together, these two maps revealed the structural relationships between all of the categories.

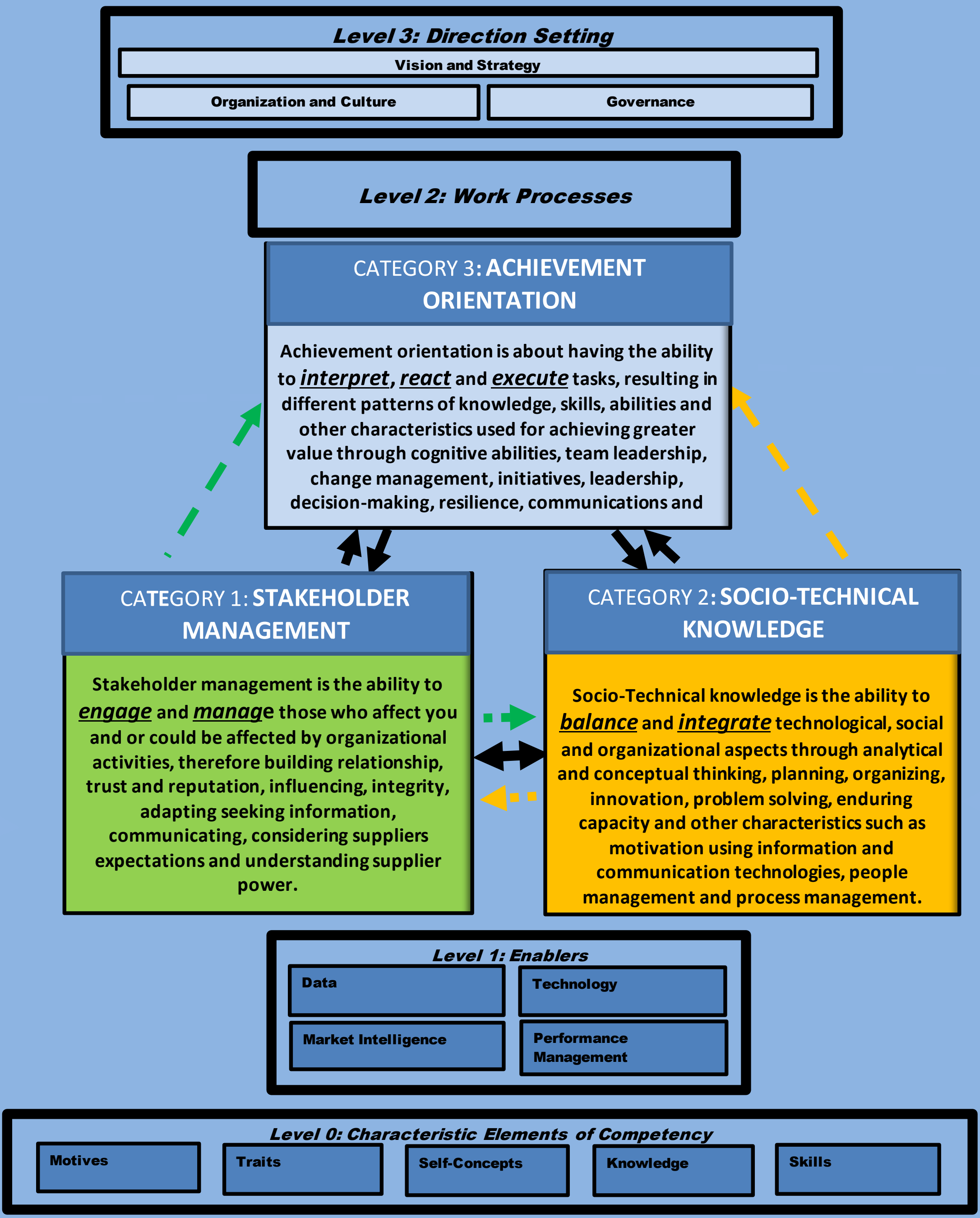
Table 24: Categories of Description defined

Category	(Referential aspects) - Meaning	(Structural aspects) - Discerning and being focally aware of and the relationship between
Category One	Competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of Category management and Strategic sourcing processes is seen as **Stakeholders Management**	**The aspect of job effectiveness and accomplishment as having a dimension of variation as the ability to *engage and manage* relevant stakeholders who affect and or could be affected by organizations activities** *" was the trial situation in this area, something like that, the first thing I tend to do is to go and meet the stakeholders. That is the key most important people. In this particular speciality area, I met the head, the organizational head", SS13-15*
Category Two	Competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of Category management and Strategic sourcing processes is seen as **Socio-Technical Knowledge**	**The aspect of job effectiveness and accomplishment as having a dimension of variation as the ability to balance and integrate technological and social aspects through analytical and conceptual thinking, planning, organizing, innovation, problem solving, enduring capacity and other characteristics such as motivation using information and communication technologies, people management and process management.** *"I don't see.. One of the big thing you do need to be able to do in category management is to interpret management information, system analysis, articulation of data, separation of data to certain extent, what is going to be an external 'mix kid'. You have got to be able to interpret data from what the trends are to be able to do the various analysis techniques, portfolio analysis, cost analysis, market analysis, and all that sort of stuff. How you bring that on-board by intelligence, how you learn about supplier, how you form relationships"* DG 656-661
Category Three	Competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of Category management and Strategic sourcing processes is seen as **Achievement Orientation**	**The aspect of job effectiveness and accomplishment as having a dimension of variation as the ability to interpret, react and execute tasks, resulting in different patterns of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics used for acheving greater value through cognitive abilities, team leadership, change management, initiatives, leadership, decision-making, resilience, communications and executing.** *"Yes, it really is, that's why I want to be involved. I have been in procurement for a number of years and I have got fifteen years in my team, all of them have been nurtured from a very junior role. Some of them have gone off, so that they can push their career further and they are now Chief Officer's level" MP 31-34*

Table 25:Outcome Space as derived from meaning structure Showing the Constitution of and Relationship between Categories through Variation in Ways of Conceiving of Competency

CONCEPTIONS	**Category 1: Stakeholders Management :** Is the ability to ***engage and manage***	**Category 2: Socio-Technical knowledge :** Is the ability to ***balance and integrate*** technological, social and organizational aspects	**Category 3: Achievement orientation:** Is about having the ability to ***interpret, react and execute*** tasks
DIMENSIONS OF VARIATION	**Engagement**	**Integration**	**Execution**
FOCUS	**Engage & Manage**	**Balance & Integrate**	**Interpret & React & Execute**
Characteristics of Competency			
Motive	• Relationship Building • Information seeking • Communication • Influencing • Maintaining Integrity • Building Trust • Adaptability • Building Reputation & Trust • Understanding Power of Suppliers	• Information Seeking • Thinking strategically and analytically • Being Innovative • Using Techniques /Tools & Technology • Communication	• Using Cognitive abilities • Team Leadership • Decision Making • Being Resilient • Communication • Information seeking • Executing
Traits	• Reflectiveness & Awareness • Adaptability	• Enduring Capabilities & Motivation	• Change Management • Communication • Executing
Self-Concepts	• Maintaining Integrity • Adaptability • Bringing New Opportunities	• Professional values / Awareness • Knowledge Acquisition • Enduring Capabilities & Motivation	• Using Cognitive abilities • Initiatives • Team Leadership • Decision Making • Being Resilient • Communication • Executing
Knowledge	• Information Seeking	• Analytical Thinking • Knowledge Acquisition • Project Management Knowledge • Analytical knowledge • Conceptual Thinking • Knowledge Management • Thinking Strategically and Analytically • Being Innovative • Using Technology / Tools & Technology • Organizing • System Thinking • Problem Solving	• Using Cognitive abilities • Initiatives • Team Leadership • Decision Making • Being Resilient • Communication • Executing
Skills	• Information Seeking	• Analytical Thinking • Knowledge Acquisition • Project Management Knowledge • Analytical knowledge • Conceptual Thinking • Knowledge Management • Thinking Strategically and Analytically • Being Innovative • Using Technology / Tools & Technology • Organizing • System Thinking • Problem Solving	• Change Management • Using Cognitive abilities • Initiatives • Team Leadership • Decision Making • Being Resilient • Communication • Executing

Figure 26: Outcome Space as derived from structure of awareness Showing Relationships between the Categories



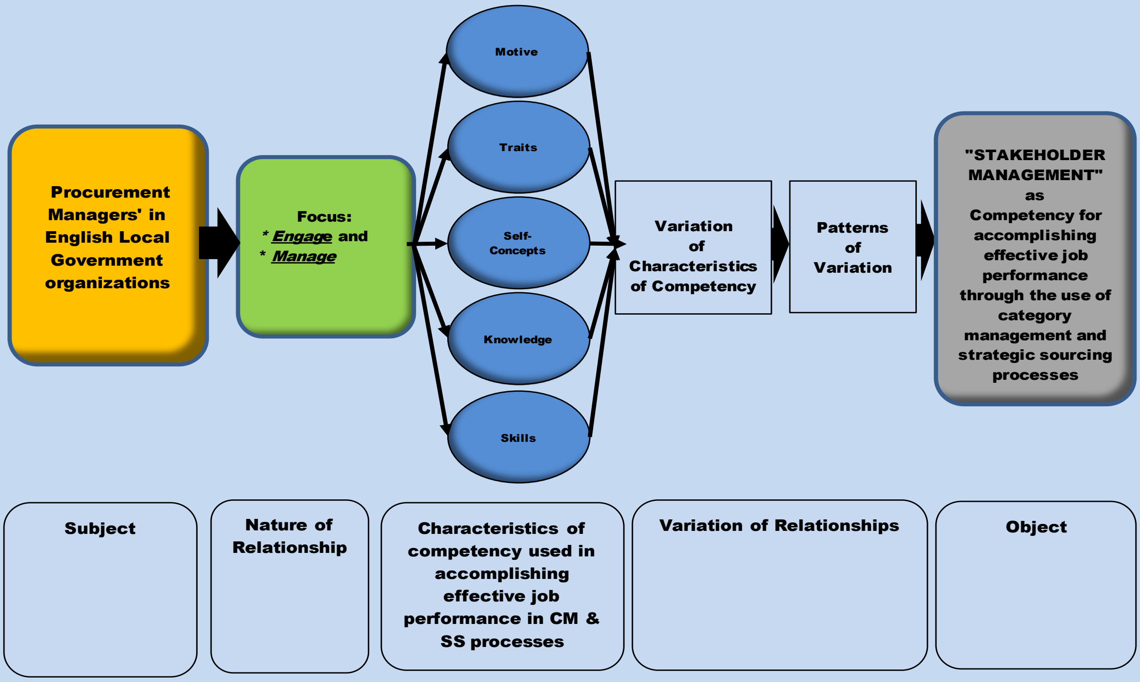
The outcome space (OS) in this research is an inclusive, hierarchical structure. The hierarchical structure as shown in Figure 26 shows the structure of awareness nested between different levels. These levels provide various environmental factors: in level 3, it provides a focus for action, level 2 provides increasing complexity, rapid change and dynamic capabilities, level 1 provides the challenges and level 0, provides the landscape for individual internalised characteristics of competency. All of these environmental levels underpin the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

4.2.1 Category One: Stakeholder Management

4.2.1.1 Subject/Object relationship of Category One: Stakeholder Management as derived from the meaning structure of CoD

In Category One, the relationship between what is experienced and how it is experienced can be expressed in terms of what PMs in ELG conceived as *stakeholder management,* as shown in Figure 27 below:

Figure 27: Nature of Subject/Object Relationship of Category One: Stakeholder Management relationship between what is experienced and how it is experienced as derived from meaning structure



Category One: Stakeholder Management

In this CoD, as can be seen in Figure 27 above, competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes was seen as residing in stakeholder management. The characteristic of competency is also impacted on by job situation, which may create a variation in the competency level and pattern of variation.

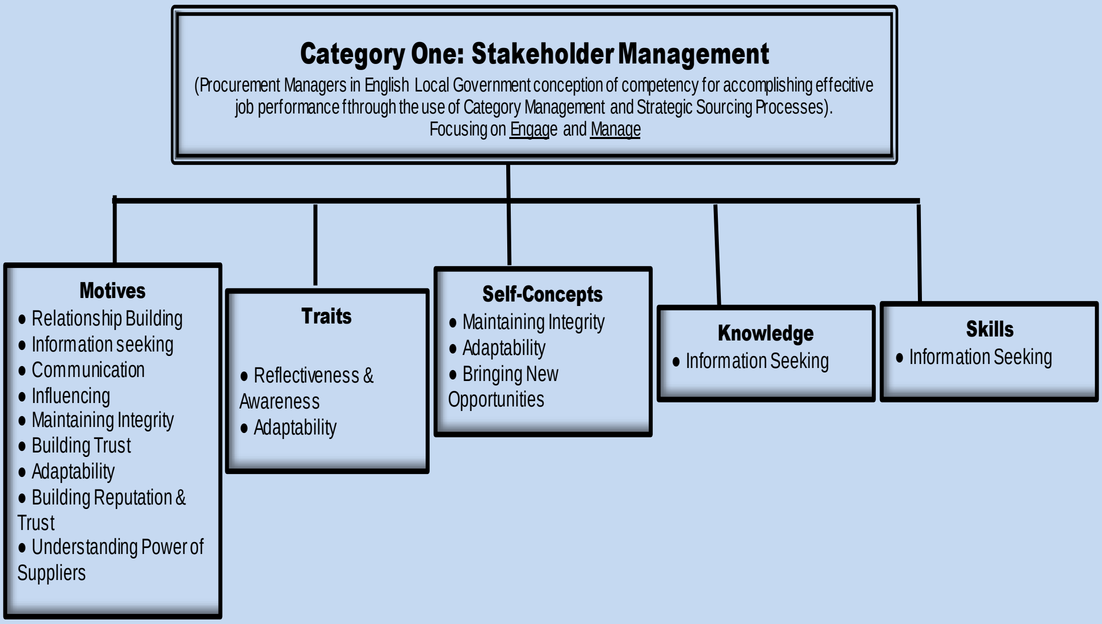
4.2.1.2 Description of the focal point of Category One: Stakeholder Management

In this CoD, conceptions of competency in accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is seen as residing in stakeholder management.

This is derived from meaning structure and the structure of awareness. As participants focus on engagement and management of those affected and what affects the organizational activities, they delimits and organize the conception in terms of competency in accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes as the nature of stakeholders evolves. This implies that all the key attributes as shown in Figure 28 below, are centred on and around that relation, forming a distinctive meaning of structure of competency in accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes at the second level of awareness and peripheral awareness. The ability to engage and manage is facilitated through building relationships, trust and reputation, influencing, integrity, adapting, seeking information, communicating, considering suppliers' expectations and understanding supplier power. These various attributes of engagements and management could be considered as motives. It is through these motives and the associated key attributes as shown in Figure 28 below, that the participants evaluate what is needed in accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The participant further expressed that they understood engagement and management of stakeholders through reflectiveness, awareness, and adaptiveness. These attributes were interpreted by the researcher as traits, self-concepts, knowledge and skills, that are required when seeking information from stakeholders. The researcher's interpretative awareness of the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, and the underlying characteristics of competency, were developed out of the interview data from participants' quotes, for example:

> *"That was the trial situation in this area, something like that, the first thing I tend to do is to go and meet the stakeholders. They are the key most important people. In this particular speciality area, I met the head, the organizational head," SS13-15*

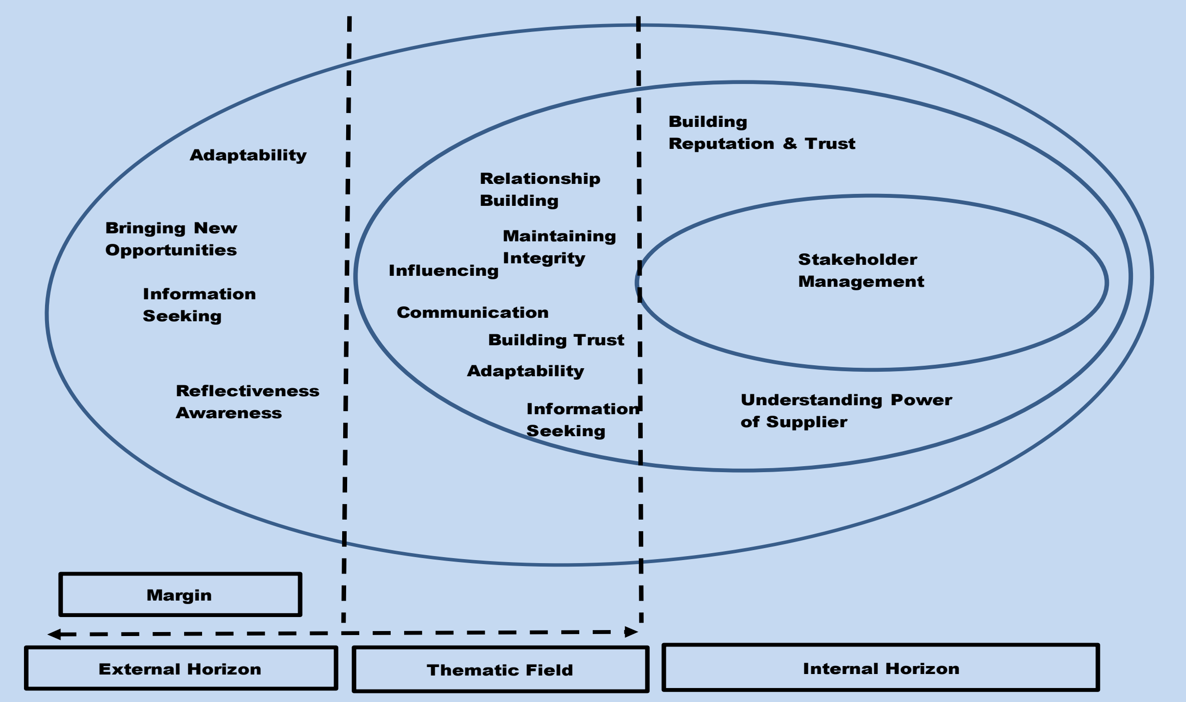
Figure 28: Category One: Stakeholder Management Key Attributes



4.2.1.3 Subject/Object relationship of Category One: Stakeholder Management as derived from structure of awareness of OS

The referential point of Category One (stakeholder management) with competency characteristics such as: ‘motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge and skills’, has a related awareness to the second level of awareness with varying key attributes ranging from *building reputation and trust* to *understanding power of suppliers* and a periphery structure of awareness ranging from: a*daptability* to *reflectiveness awareness*. The structure of awareness in Category One is shown in Figure 29 below:

Figure 29: Category One : Stakeholder Management: Nature of Structure of Awareness



Marton and Booth (1997: 133) assert that phenomenography as a way of experiencing is considered as “relational in nature due to their dependency on human activity” and a person’s awareness and consciousness, and that “the reality is external to an individual”. The explanation for this observation could be considered as that in which the participants' awareness of stakeholder management is the total experience at that given point in time, and also layered. An additional explanation is that all of the participants were aware of everything at the same time but not in the same way, hence the difference between the internal horizon, thematic field and external horizon.

4.2.1.4 Summary for Category One: Stakeholder Management conception

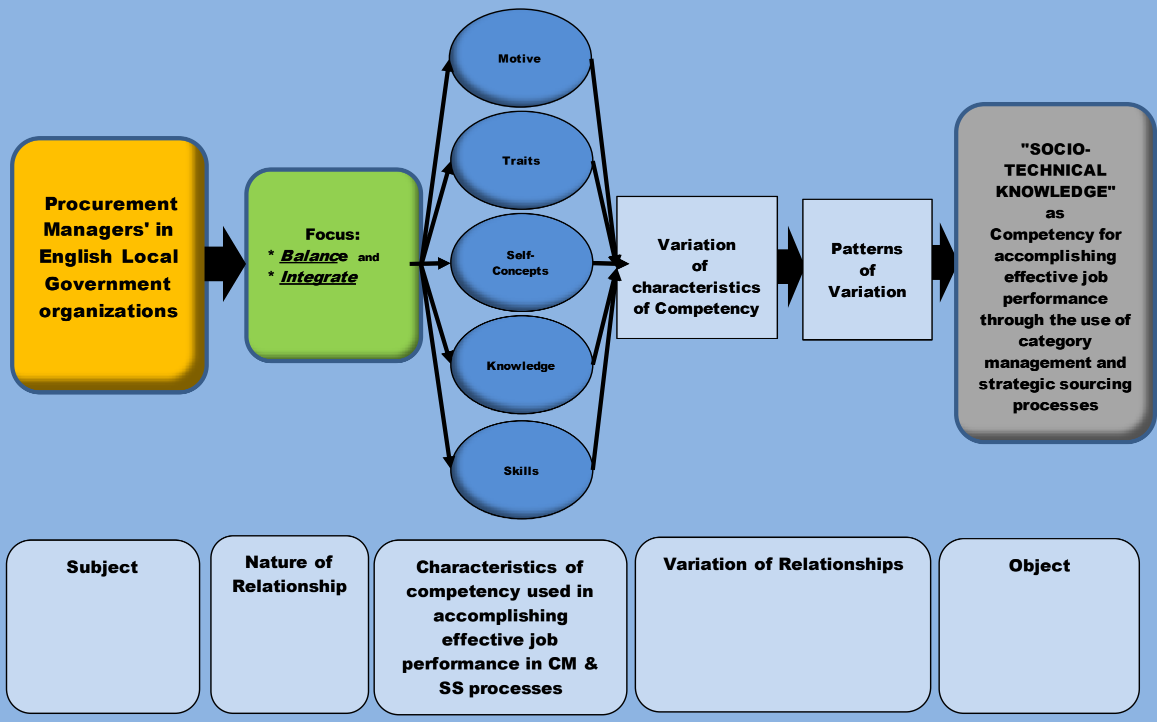
This Category One conception is labelled *‘stakeholder management’* as it emerged from the study data. In this category, the emphasis was on how the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG are expressed as s*takeholder management,* in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. Also, *engagement and management* are the focal points and discerned the key attributes, which were formed and organised within the underlying characteristics of competency: motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge and skills in the thematic field and the external horizon.

4.2.2 Category Two: Socio-Technical Knowledge

4.2.2.1 Subject/Object relationship of Category Two: Socio-Technical Knowledge as derived from the meaning structure of CoD

In Category Two (socio-technical knowledge), the relationship between what is experienced and how it is experienced can be expressed in terms of what PMs in ELG conceived as *socio-technical knowledge,* as shown in Figure 30 below:

Figure 30: Nature of Subject/Object Relationship of Category Two: Socio-Technical Knowledge relationship between what is experienced and how it is experienced as derived from meaning structure



Category Two: Socio-Technical Knowledge

As can be seen in Figure 30 above, PMs in ELG (the subject) experienced the competency *socio-technical knowledge* through the underlying characteristics of competency by focusing on '*balance' and 'integration'* to evaluate and decide what particular antecedent of the underlying characteristics of competency to use for discerning the key attributes in their approach. The characteristic of competency is also impacted on by the job situation, which may create a variation in the competency and pattern of variation. This implies that the focus, the underlying characteristics of competency and the conception create the necessary relationship between the subject and the object.

4.2.2.2 Description of the focal point of Category Two: Socio-Technical Knowledge

In this CoD, the conception of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is seen as residing in *socio-technical knowledge.* In contrast to Category One (stakeholder management), conception two, which is conceived as s*ocio-technical knowledge*, is expressed as a conception of competency in terms of knowledge growing with time, focusing on balancing and integrating technological, social and organisational aspects. The participants expressed that this is achieved in the main through the underlying characteristics of knowledge and skills. The key attributes required as the participants experienced it were as shown in Figure 31 below, as knowledge and skills: ranging from *analytical and conceptual thinking* to *process management*. They also expressed some delimiting factors as motives, traits, self-concepts, and knowledge, and key attributes ranging from: *information seeking* to *knowledge* acquisition. This change in focus implies that the attributes within this conception emerge from the understanding of the product and service categories in CM and SS processes.

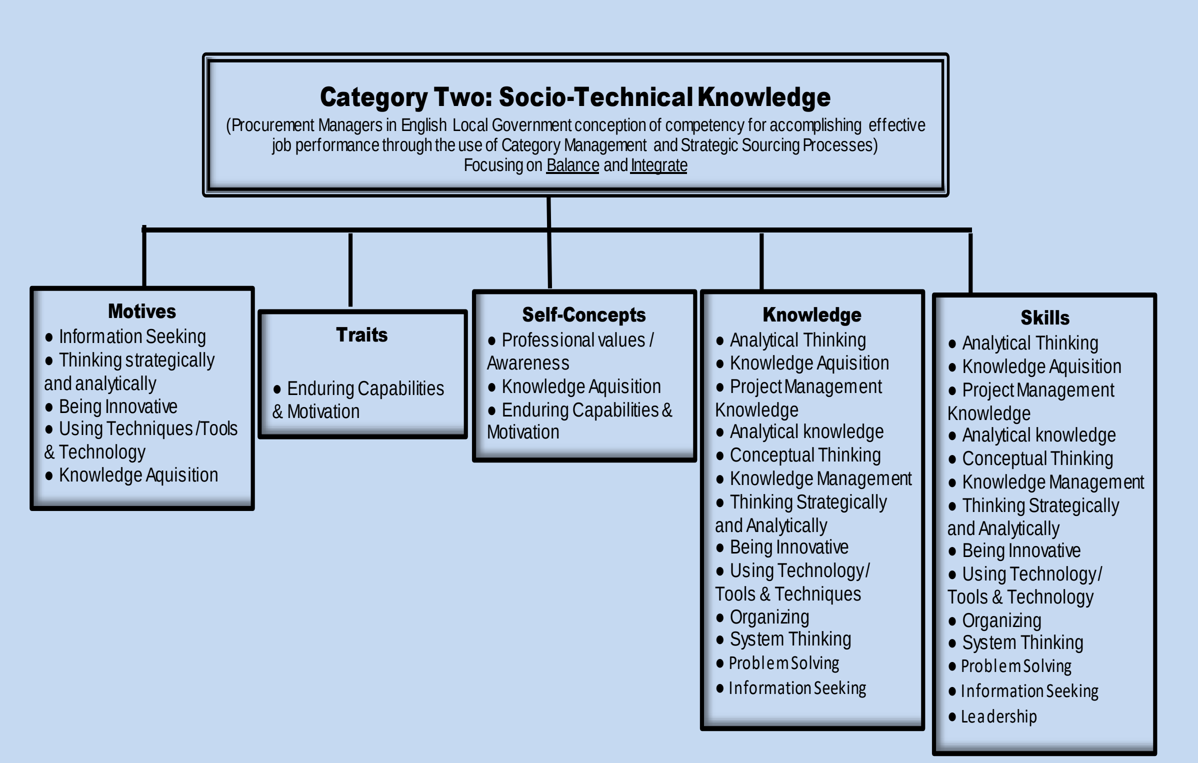
It is of interest to note that competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes means different things to the PMs in ELG for those expressing this conception and to those expressing the former conception, even though they experienced the same thing. Like the participants in conception one, the participants in conception two also point out the attributes of *information seeking* as a motive, an underlying characteristic of competency required for effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, in the way they experienced it.

The researcher's interpretative awareness of the different experiences of PMs and the underlying characteristics of competency was developed out of the interview data from participants' quotes, such as:

> *"The ability to anticipate change, which may come from the current practice of in-bound sourcing as compared to outsourcing activities, is also important for professional level 5". MP537-543*

> *"We had a lengthy, in-depth discussion about how to segment supply base and why the category I used in some of my CIPS (Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply) training study. I used a particular model I learnt during studies and I used many times. So for instance I used the Kraljic matrix (Purchasing Portfolio Analysis) model. I also used the customer segmentation model. So we would try and imagine we were in a provider's shoes and try to imagine how they will see us. I had used Porter's 5 Forces model as well, and others. So based on that customer analysis work, a couple of goes, we identified the initial draft recommendations, from which providers will, with acute priority, will focus on directly from and what it is you needed from them. So we have" SS65 -74*

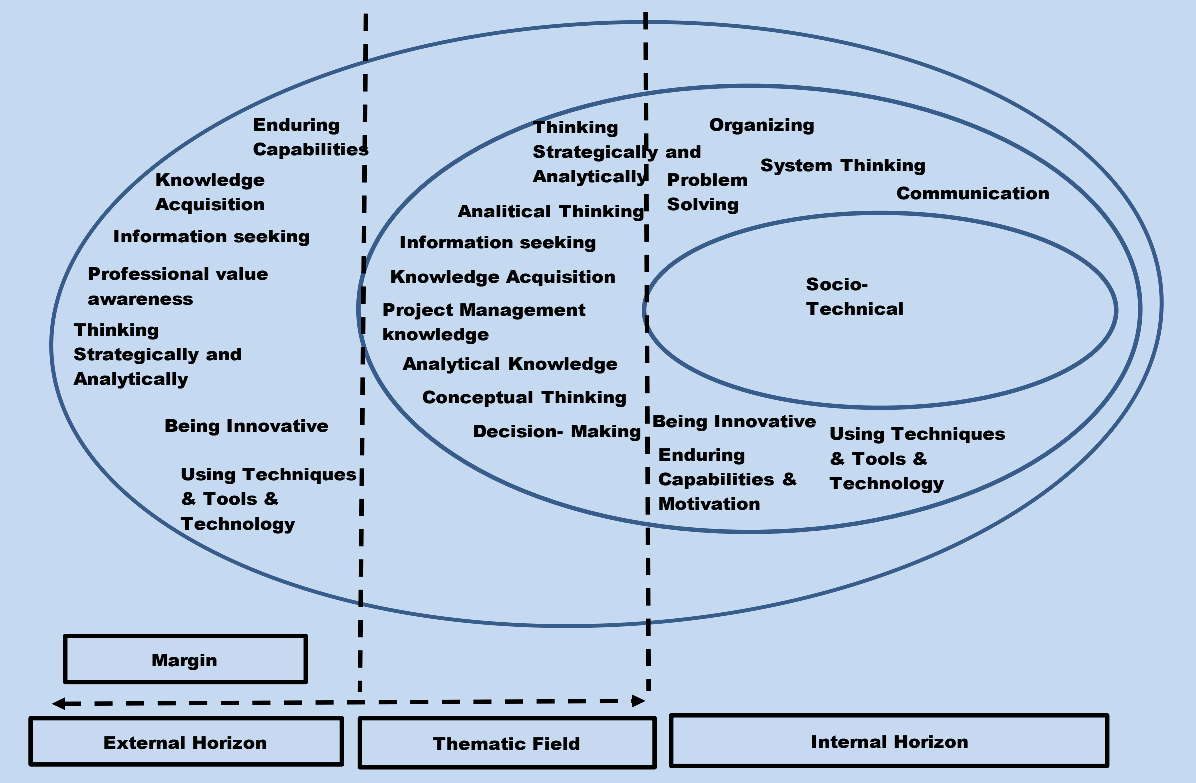
Figure 31: Category Two: Socio-Technical Knowledge key Attributes



4.2.2.3 Subject/Object relationship of Category Two: Socio-Technical Knowledge as derived from structure of awareness of OS

The referential point of Category Two (socio-technical knowledge), has a related awareness to the second level of awareness with varying characteristics ranging from: *systems thinking to using techniques and technology tools* and a periphery of structure of awareness ranging from: *enduring capabilities to using technique and technology;* conceived as key attributes of competency in accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, as shown in Figure 32 below:

Figure 32: Category Two : Socio-Technical Knowledge: Nature of Structure of Awareness



The explanation for the observation is similar to one given in Category One above in that the participants awareness of Category Two (socio-technical knowledge), is the total experience at that given point in time and layered, and that all the participants were aware of everything at the same time but not in the same way, hence the differential between the internal horizon, thematic field and external horizon, as shown in Figure 33 above.

4.2.2.4 Summary for Category Two: Socio-Technical Knowledge conception

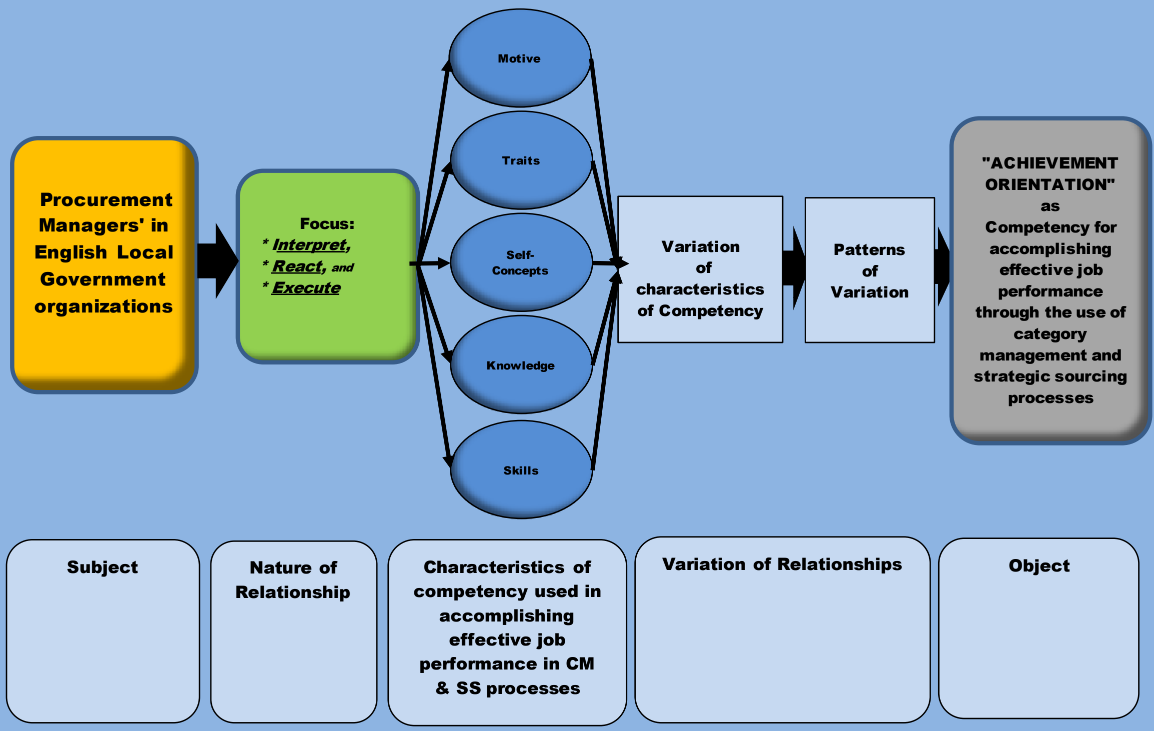
This Category Two conception is labelled *'socio-technical knowledge'* as it emerged from the study data. In this category, the emphasis was on what PMs in ELG conceived as s*ocio-technical knowledge,* as a way of experiencing competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. Using the focus of *balancing and integrating,* they also discern the key attributes, which were organised under the underlying characteristics of competency as motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge and skills, as residing in the thematic field and in the external horizon, and which may be impacted by variation of competency and pattern of variation.

4.2.3 Category Three: Achievement Orientation

4.2.3.1 Relationship of Category Three: Achievement Orientation as derived from the meaning structure of CoD

In Category Three: achievement orientation, the relationship between what is experienced and how it is experienced, can be expressed in terms of what PMs in ELG conceived as *achievement orientation,* as shown in Figure 33 below:

Figure 33: Nature of Subject/Object Relationship: Category Three: Achievement Orientation of relationship between what is experienced and how it is experienced as derived from meaning structure



Category Three: Achievement Orientation

As can be seen in Figure 33 above, PMs in ELG (the subject) in their experience, conceived the job as requiring *achievement orientation* and focusing on *interpret, react and execute* to discern the underlying characteristics of competency required as the antecedent to evaluate, decide and form the functional attributes needed in accomplishing effective performance through the utilisation of CM and SS processes.

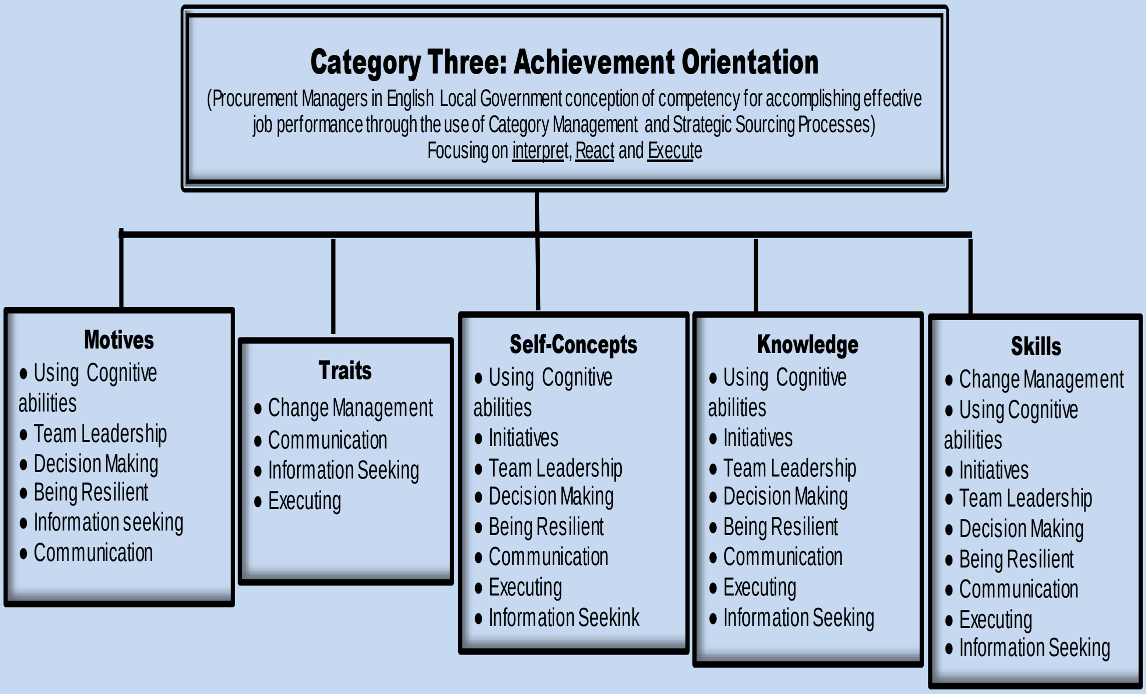
The characteristic of competency can be impacted on by the job situation, which may create a variation in the competency and pattern of variation. This implies that the conception of the job, the focus and the underlying characteristics of competency creates the necessary relationship between the subject and the object.

4.2.3.2 Description of the focal point of Category Three: Achievement Orientation

In this CoD, the conception of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is seen as residing in achievement orientation. As in the previous conceptions, participants who express this conception take account of all the elements of the underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-conception, knowledge and skills) to express their way of experiencing competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. This occurs through a focus on an ability to interpret, react and execute tasks. The key attributes they discern as a way of experiencing range from *cognitive abilities* to *execution,* and are displayed in Figure 34 below. It also appears that the change in focus implies that the attributes within this conception emerge from the different ways of experiencing, and is centred around having a sense of target, a plan, and leveraging available resources to reach objectives in CM and SS processes. The researcher's interpretative awareness of the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG of competency and the underlying characteristics of competency was developed out of the interview data from participants' quotes such as:

> *"They do, because you get a sense of pride, sense of achievement and all that instincts is to be better? What is the solution? Yes, it does work well; it does take a lot of enthusiasm, passion, and high motivation for the team to keep driving and driving. What I found on the flip-side is that eventually, we have got to allow them to sink or swim and feel that pain, you know, what is achievement or failure but cause mechanism of ownership". MP512 – 516*

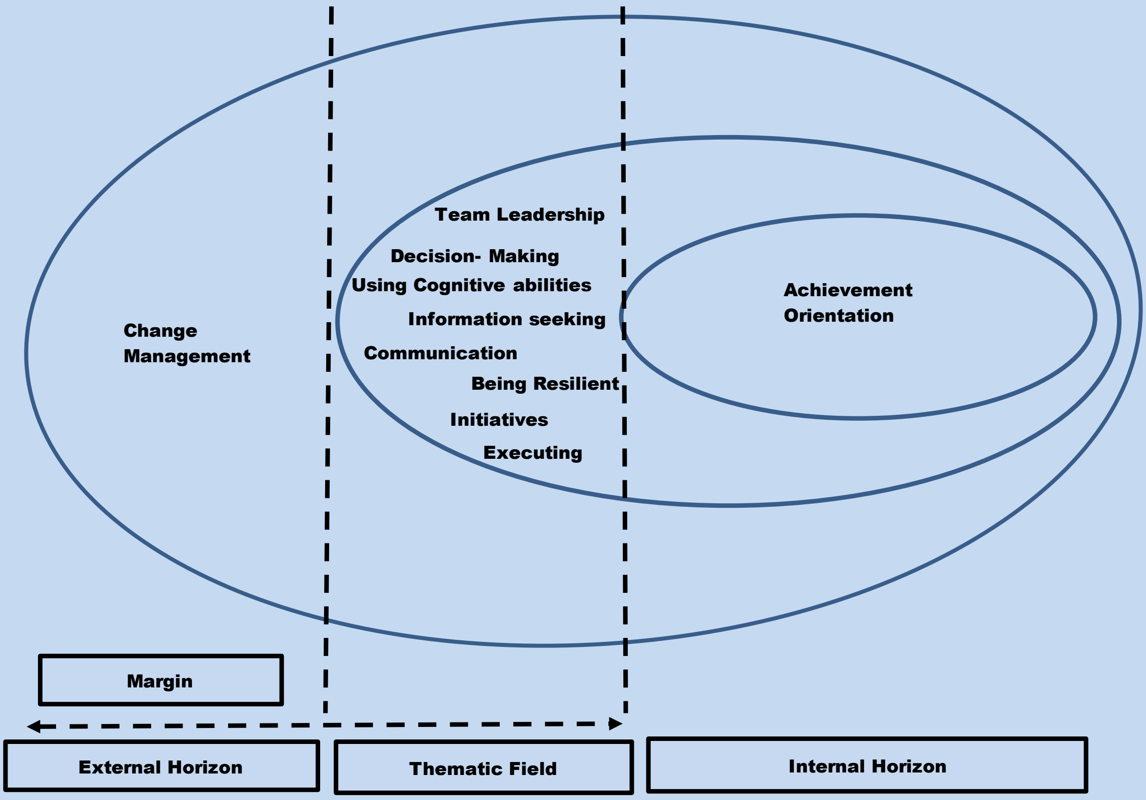
Figure 34: Category Three: Achievement Orientation Key Attributes



4.2.3.3 Subject/Object relationship of Category Three: Achievement Orientation as derived from structure of awareness of OS

The referential point of Category Three (Achievement Orientation), has a related awareness to the second level of awareness with varying characteristics ranging from: *team leadership to executing and a periphery of structure of awareness of change management,* conceived as key attributes of competency in accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, as shown in Figure 35 below:

Figure 35: Category Three : Achievement Orientation: Nature of Structure of Awareness



4.2.3.4 Summary for Category Three: Achievement Orientation conception

This Category Three conception is labelled *'achievement orientation'* as it emerged from the study data. In this category, the emphasis was on what PMs in ELG conceived as *achievement orientation,* as a way of experiencing competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The focus of *interpretation, reaction and execution* was used to discern the key attributes, which were organised within the underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge and skills), as the antecedent for its formation and residing in the thematic field and external horizon and which may be impacted by the variation of competency and pattern of variation.

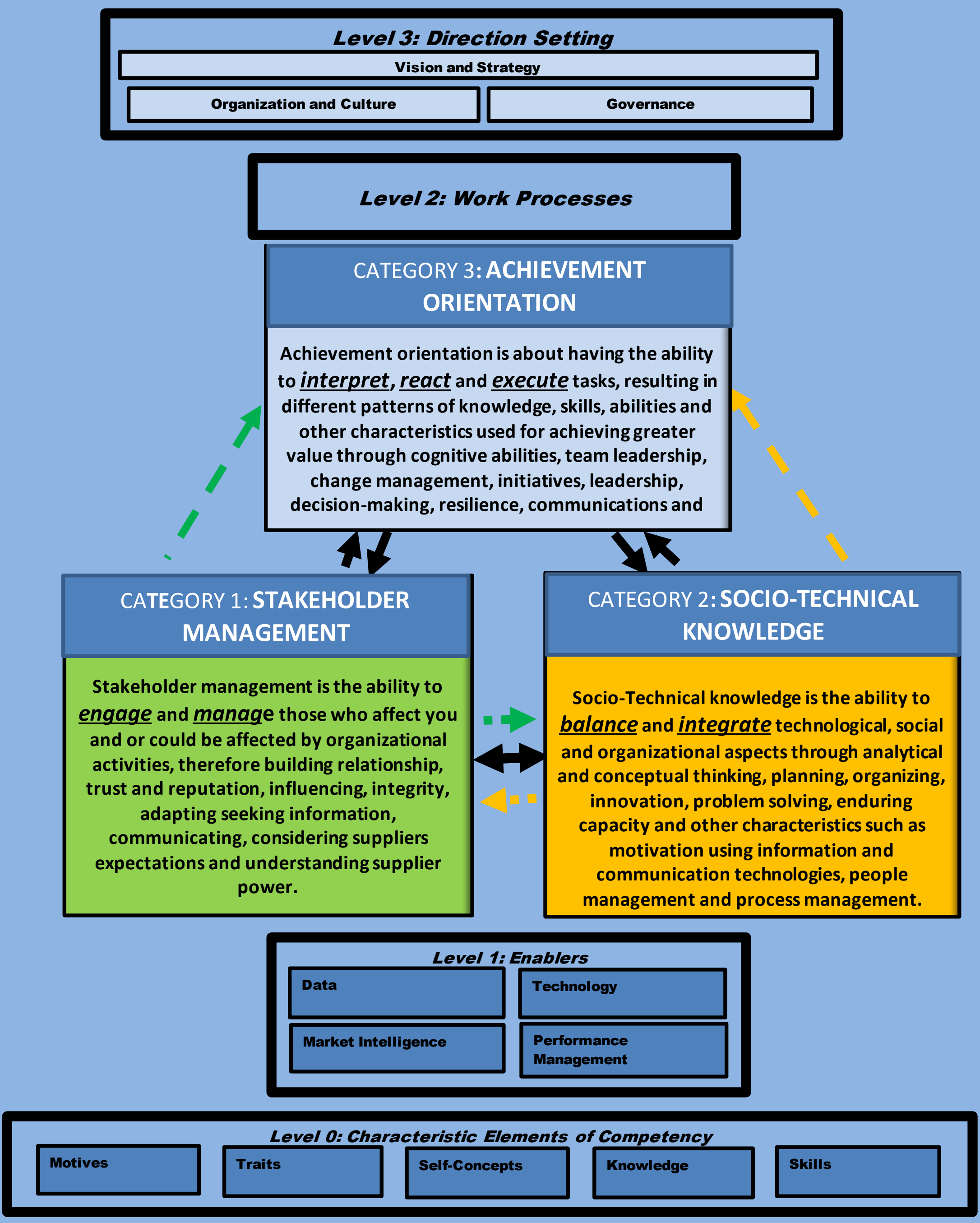
4.2.3.5 A hierarchy of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processes

As shown in Figure 26 below, the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG of competency for accomplishing effective job performance, through the use of CM and SS processes, constituted the required competency for job performance. More specifically, the different ways of conceiving the accomplishment of effective job performance constitutes three distinctive forms of conceptions of competency.

However, the conceptions do not only constitute and give rise to variation in competency but also to the underlying characteristic of competency and to a hierarchy of competency. More specifically, a hierarchy of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is established in terms of an increasing comprehensiveness of the conceptions.

In the first conception, Category One: ‘stakeholder management’, the competency is stakeholder management with the relation of engagement and management as a delimiting focus.

Figure 26: Outcome Space as derived from structure of awareness Showing Relationships between the Categories



In the second conception, Category Two: ‘socio-technical knowledge’, the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is expanded so that it included not only engagement and management, but also the relation with integration among the socio-technical knowledge.

In the third conception, Category Three: ‘achievement orientation’, the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is expanded still further, so that it not only consists of stakeholder management and socio-technical knowledge but also in relation to interpretation, reaction and execution.

The hierarchy of competency, in terms of an increasing comprehensiveness of conceptions, is still more evident through the attributes within each conception of competency. For instance, the attribute *‘information seeking’* was expressed by all participants as essential to competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. However, the meaning of the above attribute varies, depending on the conceptions it appears in.

In the first conception, Category One: ‘s*takeholder management’*, ‘*information seeking’* means understanding motives, knowledge and skills as the underlying characteristics of the competency required. Whereas, in the second conception, Category Two: ‘s*ocio-technical knowledge’*, and third conception, Category Three: ‘a*chievement orientation’*, *‘information seeking’* means just understanding the Motives. However, this ‘information seeking’ is not completely adequate as a motive in Conception Two: *‘socio-technical knowledge’* and Conception Three ‘a*chievement orientation’*. Of greater importance for Category Two conception: *‘socio-technical knowledge’* and Category Three conception ‘ac*hievement orientation’* is the knowledge and skills underlying the characteristics of competency, with attributes such as analytical thinking and executing consecutively.

Hence, the hierarchy of competency has the following character: the first conception, Category One: ‘st*akeholder management’*, is the least comprehensive, the second conception, Category Two: ‘s*ocio-technical knowledge’*, is more comprehensive than the first, and the third conception, Category Three: ac*hievement orientation’* is the most comprehensive.

The finding that the third conception is the most comprehensive suggests that the participants holding that conception are the most experienced and that those holding the first conception are the least experienced with regards to the competency in accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

This means that those with a more comprehensive conception can move to a less comprehensive conception in a given situation. For instance, if a specific situation requires the first conception *‘stakeholder management’*, then participants expressing the second or third conception can temporarily shift their focus in the way they perceive accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. However, it is important to note that this shift takes place within the more comprehensive conception.

Therefore, if the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes requires the third conception: achievement orientation’, then participants expressing the first and second conceptions would not be able to make such a shift. This is because the third conception is not included in the first and second conceptions of competency. Some empirical studies such as that by Hoffman (1999) supported this suggestion, in that PMs in ELG who expressed more comprehensive conceptions also expressed less comprehensive conceptions, whereas, the reverse is the case for those with less comprehensive conceptions. Logically, one could accept that this is the case in that the most experienced PMs in ELG have already experienced the less comprehensive conceptions as developed out of the interview data from participants' quotes such as:

> "*It's all very, very, mixed across the Country. It is very difficult. It depends on the Councils type, unitary authorities predominately like Metropolitan Borough and the London Borough are probably a better place in terms of doing Category Management. District Authorities don't have the spending capabilities, whereas, Shires County Councils spending are predominantly around infrastructure projects. So it's quite limited in terms of scope of what Category Management is"* DG18-23

> *"This is about Understanding the nature of the environment towards execution".* DW 32

The same pattern is also evident among the PMs in ELG who expressed the second conception, Category Two: s*ocio-technical knowledge*. When the participants attempted to describe the underlying characteristics of competency required for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, they assert that in the main, these are knowledge and skills. For example, PMs in ELG expressing the second conception is developed out of the interview data from participants' quotes such as:

> *"Normally, we like to see more Worcestershire based organizations win Councils business. There are some corporate priorities that we need to exercise. They are called 'Social Values' also to encompass what it is you want to achieve, typically a lot of local authorities will provide job and local apprentices and things. Here in Worcestershire one of the big one is what is called 'Corporate Parenting', where children are in a care and we are looking for providers to offer more supporting by providing the job opportunities and helping them to find the direction they want to go, that type of stuff, it's important to each LGA needs"* DG 97-104

4.2.4 Possible source of variation of conceptions of competency as derived from category of description

A question of interest is the extent to which the variation in conceptions of competency is related to PMs in ELG, in terms of their formal education and length of service or job experience working with CM and SS processes, as shown in Figure 36 below:

Figure 36: Possible source of variation: Relationship between Education, Years of Experience and Conceptions of Competency for accomplishing Effective job Performance through the use of Category Management and Strategic Sourcing Processes

	CONCEPTIONS		
Participants' Characteristics	**Category 1: Stakeholders Management:** Is the ability to **engage** and **manage**	**Category 2: Socio-Technical knowledge:** Is the ability to **balance** and **integrate** technological, social and organizational aspects	**Category 3: Achievement orientation:** Is the ability to **interpret**, **react** and **execute** tasks
Formal Education:			
* Bachelor Degree	10	10	10
* Professional Qualifications - MCIPS (Member of Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply)	8	10	10
- FCIPS (Fellow of Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply)	2	10	10
Length of experience in Category Management and Strategic Sourcing processes: * Range: Public and Private (Commercial)			
> 3 years	8	8	8
> 10 years	0	2	2

It is difficult to identify a strong link between formal education and the three conceptions of the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through CM and SS processes. As can be seen in Figure 35 above, all PMs in ELG, regardless of their level of professional qualification attainment, were represented in every conception. However, job experience in CM and SS processes does show some relationship to the variation in conceptions, but not a strong one.

The PMs in ELG expressing a second or third conception cannot be distinguished in terms of length of experience of utilising CM and SS processes but all those who expressed the first conceptions had less than 10 years of experience in the practice of CM and SS processes.

One possible explanation for this relationship is that firstly, those who did not express the first conceptions had more than 10 years’ experience in the practice of CM and SS processes. Furthermore, competency increases with time regardless of its complexity (Bals et al., 2019). In the case of competency for effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, it could be contended that it may take at least 10 years or more to consciously delimit the impact of the first conception. This explanation, however, is questionable. If this were the case, PMs in ELG with the shortest job experience in CM and SS processes would express the second and third conception less because the second and third conceptions. it could be said, require a more advanced level of social, technical knowledge and the need to leverage all available resources. This is clearly not the case. A closely-related explanation could be that PMs in ELG who did not express the first conception, had sub-consciously disregarded the first conception because of the number of years of practice of CM and SS processes or due to a defect in their phenomenographic ontological reality (relationship between consciousness and reality) or phenomenographic epistemological reality (relationship between reality and theory), as represented in their perception of the language of conversation employed or signs and symbols encountered. Either way, there is a serious disengagement in the consciousness of reality of those who have long time experience of the CM and SS processes, in the relationship between the stakeholder management conception of competency and years of experience. The researcher will however argue that this must have an implication on what the participants think about and perceive as the conception of competency.

4.2.5 Pattern of variation as a source of variation as derived from category of description

The pattern of variation is characterised according to Marton et al., (2004: 16-17) as consisting of four patterns: (1) “Contrast: which means recognizing values of an aspect”; (2) “Generalization: which means experiencing varied appearances of the same value”; (3) “Separation: which means separating aspects with varying values from invariant aspects”; and (4) “Fusion: which means experiencing several critical aspects simultaneously”. The question of interest is to what extent do the characteristics of the pattern of variation relate to the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, as shown in Figure 37 below:

Figure 37: Possible Source of Variation: Relationship between Characteristics of Pattern of Variation and Conceptions of Competency for accomplishing effective Job Performance through the use of Category Management and Strategic Sourcing Processes as derived from Category of Description

	CONCEPTIONS		
PATTERN OF VARIATION	**Category 1: Stakeholders Management:** Is the ability to **engage** and **manage**	**Category 2: Socio-Technical knowledge:** Is the ability to **balance** and **integrate** technological, social and organizational aspects	**Category 3: Achievement orientation:** Is the ability to **interpret**, **react** and **execute** tasks
Generalizing: (Experiencing varied appearance of the same value)	• Information seeking • Communication	• Information Seeking • Communication	• Communication • Information seeking

As can be seen in Figure 38 above, the only characteristic of patterns of variation that relates to the experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency in accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is the ‘Generalizing’ characteristic (experiencing varied appearance of the same value). The key value attributes creating the relationship in the pattern of variation are:

information seeking and c*ommunication*. These key value attributes are represented in every conception: s*takeholder management*; s*ocio-technical knowledge*; and a*chievement orientation.*

Experiences of PMs in ELG does bear some relationship to the pattern of variation, not a strong one but nevertheless significant. One possible explanation for this relationship is that competency is “context specific” and “increases with time” (McKevitt et al., 2012; Bals et al., 2019). In the case of competency in accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, *information seeking* and *communication* are critical at every step within the processes.

This explanation, however, is not questionable because the key value attributes: inf*ormation seeking* and c*ommunication* have values such as: active “curiosity” as supported by Bals et al., (2019) and a desire to know more about things that are important for all activities in the CM and SS processes. Therefore, it is not surprising that the ‘*Generalizing’* (experiencing varied appearance of the same value) characteristics of the pattern of variation relates to the experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency in accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

4.2.6 Identifying the existence of characteristics of competency in relation to the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, using critical incident events as derived from CoD

The question of interest is: to what extent are the underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge and skills) related to the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes?

In Category One: where the conception was described as 's*takeholder management'*, and which focused on '*engage and manage'*, all of the participants expressed '*motives'* as an essential underlying characteristic of competency.

This observation is consistent with Category Two: where the conception so*cio-technical knowledge* focused on '*balance and integrate'*, with predominately underlying characteristics of competency being *knowledge and skills*. However, the observation is not repeated in Category Three: a*chievement orientation*, which focused on '*interpret, react, and execute',* where the experiences of the participants were distributed across all of the underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge, and skills). This is displayed in Figures 38, 39 and 40 below:

Figure 38: Identification of the Existence of underlying characteristics of competency in relation to the Conceptions and Key Functional Attribute Values using Critical Incident Event

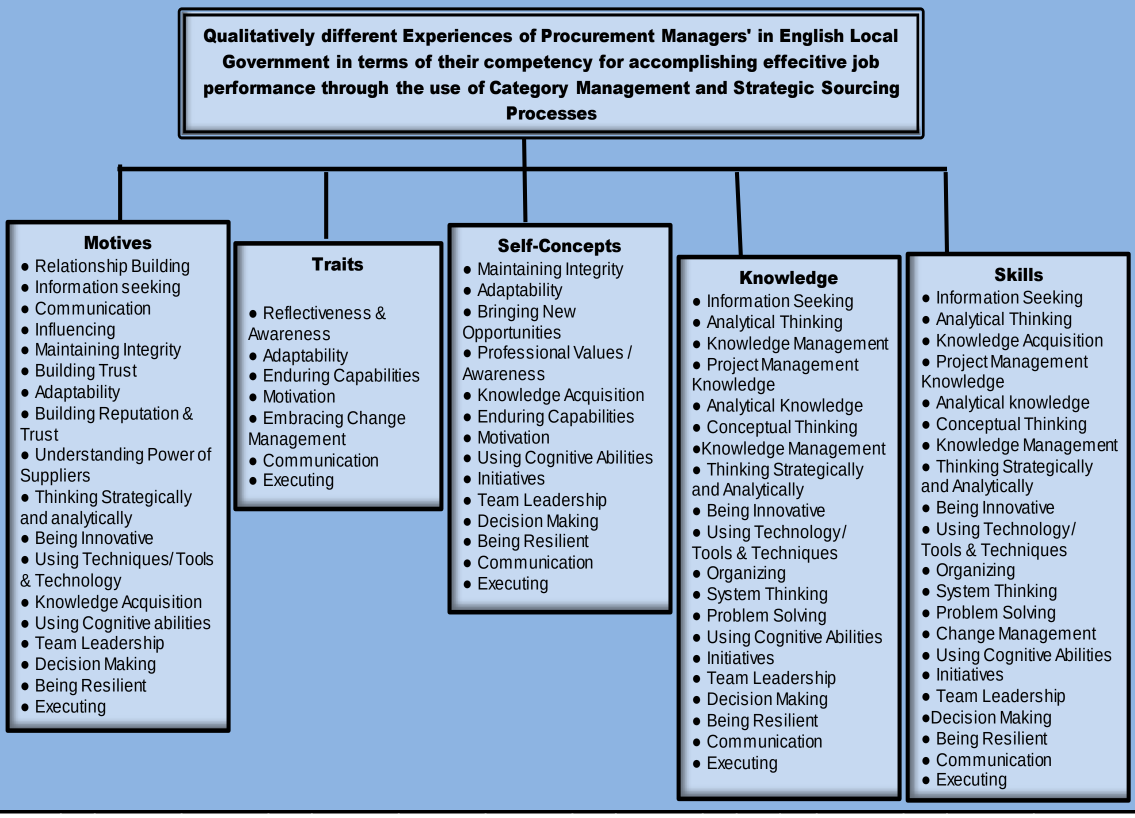
		Characteristics of Competency				
Conceptions	**Key Functional Attributes Values**	Motive	Traits	Self-Concept	Knowledge	Skills
Stakeholder Management (Ability to engage and manage)	●Relationship Building	√				
	●Information Seeking	√			√	√
	●Communication	√				
	●Influencing	√		√		
	●Maintaining Integrity	√				
	●Building Trust	√	√			
	●Reflective Awareness	√	√	√		
	●Adaptability			√		
	●Bring New Opportunities					
	●Building Trust & Reputation	√				
	●Understanding Power of Supplier	√				
Socio-Technical Knowledge (Ability to balance and integrate)	●Analytical thinking				√	√
	●Professional value Awareness			√		
	●Information Seeking	√			√	√
	●Knowledge Acquisition			√	√	
	●Project Management Knowledge				√	√
	●Analytical Knowledge				√	√
	●Conceptual thinking				√	√
	●Knowledge management & Sharing				√	√
	●Thinking Strategically	√			√	√
	●Being Innovative	√			√	√
	●Using Techniques & Tools	√			√	√
	●Using Technology				√	√
	●Organizing				√	√
	●Communication				√	√
	●System thinking				√	√
	●Problem Solving				√	√
	●Enduring Capabilities & Motivation		√	√		
Achievement Orientation (Ability to interpret, react and execute)	●Change Management		√			√
	●Using Cognitive abilities	√		√	√	√
	●Generating Initiatives			√	√	√
	●Team Leadership	√		√	√	√
	●Making Decisions	√		√	√	√
	●Being Resilient	√		√		
	●Communication	√	√	√		√
	●Executing	√	√	√	√	√

Figure 39: The Critical Incidents Events Aspects of Procurement Managers' in English Local Government Experiences in Relation to the Underlying Characteristics of Competency for Accomplishing Effective Job Performance through the use of Category Management and Strategic Sourcing Processes

CONCEPTIONS	**Category 1: Stakeholders Management:** Is the ability to <u>engag</u>e and <u>manag</u>e					**Category 2: Socio-Technical knowledge:** Is the ability to <u>balanc</u>e and <u>integrate</u> technological, social and organizational aspects					**Category 3: Achievement orientation:** Is the ability to <u>interpre</u>t, <u>reac</u>t and <u>execut</u>e tasks				
Characteristics of competency	M	T	SC	K	S	M	T	SC	K	S	M	T	SC	K	S
Number of Participants experiencing critical events	10	3	3	0	1	4	5	6	10	10	7	5	10	7	9
Number of Key Attributes idemtified as critical	9	2	3	1	1	5	1	3	12	12	6	3	6	6	7

<u>Key for Underlying Characteristics of Competency</u>
M = Motives
T = Traits
SC = Self-Concepts
K = Knowledge
S = Skills

Figure 40: Competency Model showing the qualitatively different experiences of Procurement Managers' in English Local Government and the Formation and Organization of Key Functional Attributes Preceded by the underlying Characteristics of Competency for Accomplishing Effective Job Performance through the use Category Management and Strategic Sourcing Processes



A possible explanation here is that participants' underlying characteristics for competency are antecedents for the formation, organisation and shaping of the conceptions (s*takeholder management; socio-technical knowledge, and achievement orientation*) and the associated functional attributes, in addition to their focus on tasks in order to accomplish effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. This is evident from quotes obtained during the interviews with participants, two examples are as follows:

> *"Unless you keep abreast, now, the problem I think you are looking to find out , is how to get the skill, how to get the knowledge to actually enable you to decide on the work out, what is best, you don't get that through 'academic' (studies)" .*DG 139-140

> *"So I set you an example, even though I am quite experience, I have quite a challenging procurement sometimes last year. So we were asked to be the lead procurer of a new 27 course London collaboration project. This is to transform how we do sexual health help programme. This involves stream lining NHS, modernising, making great savings, joined up people, social care, health care, NHS, 27 London boroughs, you have to understand the environment of the project, then learn about those groups, what are the types. So all I did was to map out the environment of the project, then learn about those groups, what are the types. So in the first week, an idea or the angle I am going to use, the understanding of how to put together the project, understanding the key important skills I will need to bring to the table, understanding you knowledge gap, doing your research, managing stakeholders meeting, drawing together the specifications, keep abreast of the market, understanding the drivers in the NHS, so all of that you plan out when developing the execution. I think piloting those people that understand the market and contract. Be firm when you need to be firm in your attitude and driving things through, a real mixture of having information and acquiring it. It was a niche in terms of the supplier market"* DG 143-164

4.3 Discussion as derived from Category of Description (CoD) and (OS) findings

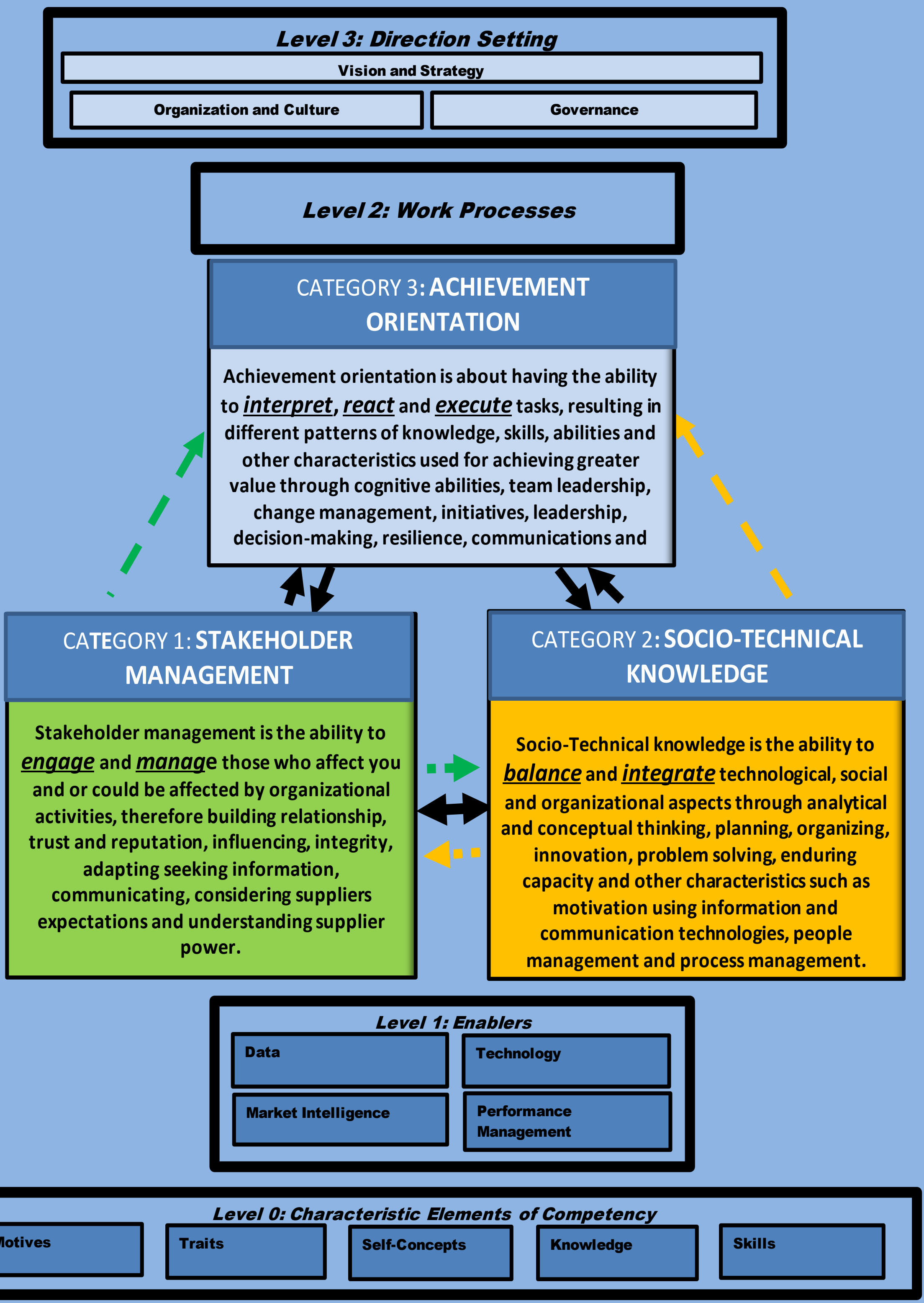
4.3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to contribute to knowledge and literature surrounding the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency, for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The aim, objectives and research questions are outlined in Chapter One. The study used a phenomenographic research approach, which allowed experiences to emerge from the data and also showed the variation in the experiences and how the experiences were logically related to each other. These different ways of experiencing the phenomenon were reported as three logically related CoD, as shown in Table 25 and Figure 26 below:

Table 25:Outcome Space as derived from meaning structure Showing the Constitution of and Relationship between Categories through Variation in Ways of Conceiving of Competency

CONCEPTIONS	**Category 1: Stakeholders Management :** Is the ability to ***engage and manage***	**Category 2: Socio-Technical knowledge :** Is the ability to ***balance and integrate*** technological, social and organizational aspects	**Category 3: Achievement orientation:** Is about having the ability to ***interpret, react and execute*** tasks
DIMENSIONS OF VARIATION	**Engagement**	**Integration**	**Execution**
FOCUS	**Engage & Manage**	**Balance & Integrate**	**Interpret & React & Execute**
Characteristics of Competency			
Motive	• Relationship Building • Information seeking • Communication • Influencing • Maintaining Integrity • Building Trust • Adaptability • Building Reputation & Trust • Understanding Power of Suppliers	• Information Seeking • Thinking strategically and analytically • Being Innovative • Using Techniques /Tools & Technology • Communication	• Using Cognitive abilities • Team Leadership • Decision Making • Being Resilient • Communication • Information seeking • Executing
Traits	• Reflectiveness & Awareness • Adaptability	• Enduring Capabilities & Motivation	• Change Management • Communication • Executing
Self-Concepts	• Maintaining Integrity • Adaptability • Bringing New Opportunities	• Professional values / Awareness • Knowledge Acquisition • Enduring Capabilities & Motivation	• Using Cognitive abilities • Initiatives • Team Leadership • Decision Making • Being Resilient • Communication • Executing
Knowledge	• Information Seeking	• Analytical Thinking • Knowledge Acquisition • Project Management Knowledge • Analytical knowledge • Conceptual Thinking • Knowledge Management • Thinking Strategically and Analytically • Being Innovative • Using Technology / Tools & Technology • Organizing • System Thinking • Problem Solving	• Using Cognitive abilities • Initiatives • Team Leadership • Decision Making • Being Resilient • Communication • Executing
Skills	• Information Seeking	• Analytical Thinking • Knowledge Acquisition • Project Management Knowledge • Analytical knowledge • Conceptual Thinking • Knowledge Management • Thinking Strategically and Analytically • Being Innovative • Using Technology / Tools & Technology • Organizing • System Thinking • Problem Solving	• Change Management • Using Cognitive abilities • Initiatives • Team Leadership • Decision Making • Being Resilient • Communication • Executing

Figure 26: Outcome Space as derived from structure of awareness Showing Relationships between the Categories



All three CoD addressed the first research objective:

- to analyse the qualitatively different experiences of procurement managers in English local government, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processes.

The CoD presented the essential parts of the meaning structure and the structure of awareness of each experience of competency for CM and SS processes and outlined their relationships with each other.

The CoD, together with the OS, provided an answer to the second and third research objectives:

- to appraise critically the aspects that differentiate qualitatively varying ways of experiencing competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processes.

- to analyse the critical incident event aspects of the qualitatively different experiences of procurement managers in English local government, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processes, that relates to the underlying characteristics of competency.

In the remaining sections of Chapter Four, consideration was given to how this relates to the literature surveyed earlier in the thesis. Also, the implications and limitations of the findings and suggestions for further research are discussed.

4.3.2 Toward a new understanding of the conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, as derived from CoD and OS findings

The research findings assert that the conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes in literature to date have concentrated more on the visible aspects of competency (i.e. knowledge and skills) which can be characterised as attainment, at the expense of the non-visible aspects (i.e. motives, traits, and self-concepts) which can be characterised as disposition.

Epistemologically, this study departs from a rationalistic approach (reason as the chief source of knowledge or justification) for the study of the conceptions of competency, to a research study based on an interpretative paradigm, namely phenomenography.

The research findings and the approach adopted provide a new understanding of, and a new method for, identifying, describing and analysing the qualitatively different experiences of competency in terms of accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

The central findings generated by the phenomenographic approach as derived from CoD are that the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency are not primarily a specific set of attributes. Instead, PMs in ELG combine clusters of the underlying characteristics of competency (motive, traits, self-concepts, knowledge and skills) as an antecedent underpinning the CoD.

More specifically, the findings suggest that the basic meaning structure of the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes constitutes *all* of the underlying characteristics of competency, which underpins the CoD. Therefore, it is the underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge and skills) that make up, form, organise and shape the attributes for the competency into a distinctive competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. Hence, the findings suggest that the particular qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency define what the individual develops and uses for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

Firstly, the findings suggest that attributes do not have a fixed meaning, but rather, meaning is acquired through the specific way in which the experiences of PMs in ELG are underpinned by the underlying characteristics of competency. For instance, the research findings demonstrated that the meaning of attribute *information seeking* and *communication* varied depending on the particular underlying characteristics of competency and conception (stakeholder management; socio-technical knowledge and achievement orientation) in which it appeared.

4.3.2.1 Category One: Stakeholder Management

The first conception, *stakeholder management,* is one qualitatively different way in which the experiences of PMs in ELG in this study were found to relate to competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. This was suggested to be through the functional attributes *information seeking* and *communication,* which characteristically is conceived as: ‘motive', ‘knowledge’, and ‘skills’. This means intimately knowing the business objectives and understanding the need to collect information, the type of information required and how to apply the information with a particular stakeholder, so as to be able to engage and manage in a particular way, for the purpose of long-term collaboration or partnership with the stakeholder.

Spencer and Spencer (1993: 34-5) suggested that the behavioural aspect of this competency is that one asks questions, “personally investigates, digs deeper, contacts others, does research" and establishes their own system. In addition, Bals et al., (2019: 6), suggested that competency also requires establishing knowledge foundation, developing the actionable task, executing against plan, monitoring, adjusting development, and maintenance of close “stakeholder relation”. McKevitt et al., (2012) profiled it as political, pragmatic and person-cantered in their competency quadrant, whilst, Tassabehji et al., (2008) outlined it as a required external enterprise skills and strategic business skills of competency.

4.3.2.2 Category Two: Socio-Technical Knowledge

In the second conception (socio-technical knowledge), *information seeking and communication* were found to relate to competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, and were also conceived characteristically as a ‘motives’. In other words, a way of seeking what is needed in order to balance and integrate the technological, social and organisational aspects, in order to accomplish effective job performance. As suggested by Rafati et al., (2015: 6), what are critical to competency through the use of CM and SS processes are both “data management and data analytics”.

McKevitt et al., (2012: 4) saw it as "commercial input in terms of concepts, models and principles and as a process in terms of working within the constraints of the organizational culture and legal"; and Tassabehji et al., (2008) see it as constituting required technical skills and interpersonal skills of competency.

4.3.2.3 Category Three: Achievement Orientation

In the third conception (achievement orientation), *information seeking and communication* were also found to relate to competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes and were also conceived characteristically as a motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge, and skills, meaning a way of knowing how to interact, react, and execute the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. As suggested by Bals et al., (2019: 5), that execution is crucial for competency in CM and SS processes by "taking a portfolio approach by way of knowing your targets and having a plan to get there, getting projects teed up and leveraging available resources" and Giunipero et al., (2006) see it as an alignment for supply management skills with trends impacting the strategic relationship.

Moreover, the research findings support the concept of competency as proposed by Boyatzis (1982 and 2007), McClelland (1998), Tucker et al., (1994), Spencer and Spencer (1993) and Lucia and Lepsinger (1999): as a cluster of related motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge and skills, termed as initiators of what people do. This represents the link between the concept of competency characteristics, the critical behaviour and performance on the job, and can be measured through well-accepted standards and that can be improved via training and development.

But because competency is context specific, as suggested by Gammelgaard and Larson (2001), McKevitt et al., (2012) and Bals et al., (2019), the ability to use these clusters of competency characteristics will be dependent on the situation, which is more suited to a complex and dynamic environment, such as those experienced by PMs in ELG, rather than just knowledge and skills, which underpins the traditional view of competency as a step-by-step process from novice to expert status as proposed by Benner (1984) and Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986).

In conclusion, the proposed understanding of the conception of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes in this present research addresses the first research objective: *to analyse the qualitatively different experiences of procurement managers in English local government, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processe*s.

4.3.2.4 The structural relationships between categories

The qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, not only give rise to distinctively different forms of conceptions of competency but also to a hierarchy of conceptions of competency.

The hierarchy of conceptions of competency was empirically demonstrated by an increasing mixture of nested comprehensiveness of conceptions of competency for attributes such as '*information seeking'* and '*communication*', derived from a constitution of clustering of the underlying characteristics of competency. More specifically, Conception Three: 'ac*hievement orientation,*' which included competency of '*communication*' and *'information seeking'* attributes, constituted all forms of the underlying characteristics of competency. Conception Two: 'so*cio-technical knowledge'*, which included competency of '*communication*' and '*information seeking'* attributes, constituted only one form of the underlying characteristics of competency; and Conception One: 's*takeholder managemen*t', which included competency of *'communication'* and '*information seeking'* attributes, constituted only three of the underlying characteristics of competency.

The research findings suggest that the capacities of the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG expressing the more comprehensive conceptions, are mixed and nested in how the antecedent underlying characteristics of competency forms, organises and shapes their conceptions in a given situation.

Finally, the findings provide an alternative understanding not only of what constitutes the conception of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, but also of how the conception of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is developed, formed, organised and shaped.

Departing from the rationalistic approaches in which competency development, formation, organization, and shaping are regarded as attribute acquisition,

The findings in this study, makes the assertion that the conception of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes constitute clusters of the underlying characteristics of competency as an essential antecedent towards the formation, organization, and shaping for the required functional attribute. As suggested by Walker and Avant (1995: 8), "antecedents provide additional insight about the attributes and illustrate the context in which the concept is used, which includes that accountability and responsibility for knowledge and actions are evident".

The findings in this research show the qualitatively varying experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency and stipulate the underlying characteristics of competency and the associated attributes that forms, organise and shape the meaning of the different conceptions. More specifically, the research findings suggest two basic forms of conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, formation, organisation, shaping and development: (1) changing the present conception to a different conception of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes; and (2) forming, organising, shaping, developing and deepening present qualitatively different ways of experiencing conceptions of competency, in terms of accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

4.3.2.5 Discussion of the critical aspects of the qualitatively varying experiences: Variation of competency and pattern of variation as source of variation

4.3.2.5.1 Discussion of variation of competency as a source of variation

The findings show that the critical aspects of the qualitatively different experiences amongst PMs in ELG is not first and foremost related to a specific set of attributes based on qualification, but is determined by experience, as shown in Figure 36 below.

The research findings suggest that this may be due to the underlying characteristics of competency underpinning the conceptions, which precedes and acts as a turning point for the formation, organisation and shaping of the functional attributes, despite the fact that stakeholder management ramifies throughout CM and SS processes.

Figure 36: Possible source of variation: Relationship between Education, Years of Experience and Conceptions of Competency for accomplishing Effective job Performance through the use of Category Management and Strategic Sourcing Processes

	CONCEPTIONS		
Participants' Characteristics	**Category 1: Stakeholders Management:** Is the ability to **engage** and **manage**	**Category 2: Socio-Technical knowledge:** Is the ability to **balance** and **integrate** technological, social and organizational aspects	**Category 3: Achievement orientation:** Is the ability to **interpret**, **react** and **execute** tasks
Formal Education:			
* Bachelor Degree	10	10	10
* Professional Qualifications - MCIPS (Member of Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply)	8	10	10
- FCIPS (Fellow of Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply)	2	10	10
Length of experience in Category Management and Strategic Sourcing processes:			
* Range: Public and Private (Commercial)			
> 3 years	8	8	8
> 10 years	0	2	2

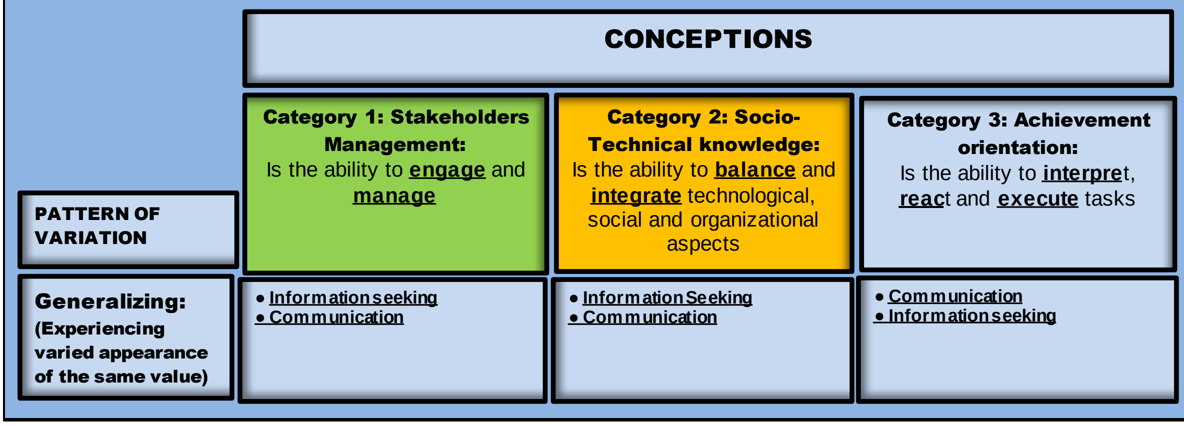
The findings suggest that although formal qualification is a valuable acquisition which demonstrates attainment to underpin and create a commonality sense of approach, experience is used to resurrect individual thoughts and responses to consequences.

Hoffmann (1997: 7) suggests that when competency focuses on the required “input of individuals in order to produce competent performance, competency appears to come from a different starting point used to begin the design of learning".

4.3.2.5.2 Discussion on characteristics of pattern of variation as a source of variation

The critical aspects of the qualitatively varying experiences amongst PMs in ELG, as demonstrated by the pattern of variation, is not first and foremost related to a specific set of attributes for a particular set of conceptions, neither is it a single underlying characteristic of competency. Instead, it consists of patterns of variation of attributes, which are found to be visible in varying underlying characteristics of competency as shown in Figure 37 above.

Figure 37: Possible Source of Variation: Relationship between Characteristics of Pattern of Variation and Conceptions of Competency for accomplishing effective Job Performance through the use of Category Management and Strategic Sourcing Processes as derived from Category of Description



For instance, *communication* and *information seeking* as functional attributes are visible in all three categories of description, and also are found to be visible in all the underlying characteristic elements of competency, but only obey one characteristic principle of patterns of variation (generalising: meaning varying appearance of the same value).

The result findings suggest that the pattern of variation demonstrates that the functional attributes (communication and information seeking) are discerned by the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, as critical to the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. As suggested by Marton and Booth (1997: 14), this pattern of variation "helps to discern critical features of the particular skill to be learned".

In conclusion, the proposed understanding of conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes as experienced by PMs in ELG, in this present research, addresses the second research objective: *to critically appraise the aspects that differentiate qualitatively varying experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processes.*

4.3.2.6 Discussion on the identification of the existence of underlying characteristics of competency in relation to the conceptions and key functional attribute values using critical incident event

The identification of the existence of underlying characteristics of competency in relation to the conceptions and key functional attribute values using critical Incident event shows that all of the underlying characteristics of competency were represented and the particular underlying characteristics that form, organise and shape the key attribute were prominent. For instance, 'st*akeholder management'* key attributes were formed, organised and shaped by distinctive, dispositional personal characteristics, principally by motives; *Socio-Technical Knowledge*' by: motives, knowledge and skills; and '*Achievement Orientation'*, by: motive, traits, self-concepts, knowledge and skills.

The research findings suggests that the existence of the underlying characteristics of competency in the experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, precedes the formation, organization and shaping of the associated functional attributes and the focus on the tasks. Also suggested by the research findings is that the conception 'achievement orientation' is more highly comprehensive in the formation, organisation and shaping of the conceptions because it takes into consideration all of the characteristic elements of competency (motive, traits, self-concepts, knowledge and skills) as the input. Although as suggested by Zwijze-Koning et al., (2015) the evaluation of an employee's performance using critical incident event is subjective in itself and generally, in critical situation, it is difficult to predict individual behaviour, whether of high performance or average performance and consequently the future competency for behaviour is difficult to predict.

Nevertheless, the approach in this research provides an alternative insight for the identification of the existence of conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

In conclusion, the proposed understanding of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes as experienced by PMs in ELG in relation to the underlying characteristics of competency addressed the third research objective: *to analyse the critical incident event aspects of the qualitatively different experiences of procurement managers in English local government, in relation to the underlying characteristics of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processes.*

4.3.3 Conclusion

The findings in this research study are presented as a phenomenographic outcome of categories of description (CoD) and outcome space (OS), identifying and analysing the issues surrounding the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes in the workplace. The study also expressed the conceptions of competency as three categories of description: stakeholder management, socio-technical knowledge and achievement orientation, and the variation and pattern of ways that show that they are logically related to one another. This thereby, contributes to PSM knowledge within the discipline of CM and SS processes.

Also in the discussion, the researcher was able to demonstrate a new understanding of how the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency, are a product of not only the so called 'visible' aspects of competency (knowledge and skills) which are attained through acquisition and experiences, but also by the so called 'non-visible' aspects of competency such as: motives, traits, and self-concepts, which are dispositional in nature by individual orientation. By so doing, the researcher was able to analyse that the way competency is experienced is not primarily through a specific set of attributes, instead, a combination of underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge, and skills). These underlying characteristics of competency clustered together in varying ways as an antecedent underlying the CoD of the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. These findings are supported by statements made by other researchers such as Bals et al., (2019) who contend that the nature of competency and competencies are dependent on all of the underlying characteristics of competency, in situations and environments that are complex and dynamic, such as those that prevail in CM and SS processes in the public sector including within local government authorities.

The discussion also highlights the implications of category of description and outcome space in relation to the conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes as constituting clusters of underlying characteristics of competency. McKevitt (2012) and Bals et al., (2019) commented that the implications for PMs may come from how to use underlying characteristics of competency as a starting point to identify, describe, and analyse the required functional attributes for PSM activities, but the study demonstrates the importance of being able to analyse how attributes are formed, developed, organised, and shaped into distinctive structures of competency, which cannot be ignored.

However, the limitations found in this study contradict the suggestion about the issue of the transferability of skills and abilities from one area to another as a concern, in that by taking the underlying characteristics of competency as a starting point, it allows for the appropriate reconciliation of the formation, organisation and shaping of the required functional attributes, and the conception of a new job situation.

Issues of OS as being the essential part of the meaning structure and the structure of awareness for each experience of competency were pointed out. The researcher argued that the qualitatively different experiences of PM in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, not only gives rise to distinctively different forms of conceptions of competency but also to a hierarchy of conceptions of competency.

The research findings suggest that a hierarchy of change in conceptions of competency was empirically demonstrated through an increasing mixture of nested comprehensive conceptions for attributes such as information seeking and communication, derived from a constituent of clusters of underlying characteristics of competency through the use of CM and SS processes according to the experiences of PMs in ELG. The effect this has on the experiences of PMs in ELG is centred around the need to design their conceptions when trying to conduct developmental activities, such as on-the job training or in-house or webinar conference attendance.

The limitation however, as suggested in the research findings, is the extent to which the identified and analysed conceptions reflect the entire variations of conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

With this limitation in mind, it was suggested that further empirical study is required, using other methods such as action research or longitudinal investigation. Hopefully, such assessment of the antecedent and consequences of the underlying characteristics of competency and associated functional attributes for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes may emerge.

4.4 Summary of Chapter Four

Chapter Four has presented the findings of CoD and OS uncovered through the phenomenographic investigation into qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

4.4.1 Highlights of Findings

The findings deal with the objectives of the research. In terms of the first objective as stated in Chapter One, the research found that a total of three categories of description emerged from the analysis of data. Three significant conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes have been found: *stakeholder management, socio-technical knowledge* and *achievement orientation.*

In terms of the second objective as stated in Chapter One, the research found that variation existed in the lived experiences of PMs in ELG. These variations were structured as follows: Conception One: stakeholder management, this conception was experienced as an engagement and managing; Conception Two: socio-technical knowledge, this conception was experienced as balancing and integrating the technological, social and organisational factors; and for Conception Three: achievement orientation, the conception was experienced as being able to interpret, react and execute tasks. The findings also suggested that these conceptions are logically related and nested with each other hierarchically.

In terms of the third objective as stated in Chapter One, clusters of underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge, and skills) were understood to be related to each conception, and as antecedent for the formation and organisation of the associated functional attributes required to accomplish effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, as experienced by PMs in ELG.

4.4.2 Further summary of Chapter Four

The description of the conceptions included quotes from participants, extracts from interviews and words from participants woven into the text. The CoD also shows the constituent elements of the underlying characteristic of competency with the associated functional attributes.

The chapter explains how the meaning structure and the structure of awareness demonstrate the relationships of the categories in terms of the sense of awareness and consciousness underpinning the emerging functional attributes, category by category. The possible source of variation of conceptions of competency and the pattern of variation were shown to demonstrate strong link in the formation of functional attributes such as information seeking and communications.

OS is based on meaning structure and structure of awareness, constituting three distinctive forms of conceptions of competency, which do not only constitute and give rise to a variation of conceptions of competency but also to the underlying characteristics of competency, which increases the mixture of nested comprehensiveness of the conceptions of competency.

The discussion centred around the basic meaning structure of the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, as derived from CoD as constituting not a specific set of attributes, but rather a cluster of the underlying characteristic elements of competency, as an antecedent for the formation, organisation and shaping of the associated functional attributes.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this research study is to investigate the qualitatively different experiences of procurement managers in English local government, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management (CM) and strategic sourcing (SS) processes. The objectives are:

Objective One: To analyse the qualitatively different experiences of procurement managers in English local government, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes.

Objective Two: To critically appraise the aspects that differentiate qualitatively varying experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

Objective Three: To analyse the critical incident event aspects of the qualitatively different experiences of PMS in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes and the relationship with the underlying characteristics of competency.

By responding to the three objectives, this research has undoubtedly reinforced the argument that there is a significant gap in extant literature regarding the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes, in the context of local government. What PMs in ELG shared with the researcher as their lived experiences reflects the complexity, dynamism and situational nature of the processes and the difficulties that exist in CM and SS processes. The recollection of experiences provided by PMs in ELG collectively provides an intimate and personal window that allows their lived experiences to be understood.

The conclusion commences with the contributions that the study has made to the understanding of conceptions of competency, phenomenography and procurement and supply management (PSM) knowledge. The research findings have some implications for competency, research and practice. The limitations of the current study are explored at the end of the chapter and some recommendations are made for future research in this field.

5.2 Contribution to the understanding of conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes

The research concerns a unique application of a business commercial tool in the context of public procurement (within local government) and the perception of practitioners of the personal and individual characteristics of the competency necessary for the practice of category management and strategic sourcing processes. The findings of this present study may show some similarities in some areas of the functional attributes and characteristics of competency but differences in the domain to those other areas of procurement and supply management study where they are applied in the public and private sector, for example in Bals et al., (2019). Despite some similarities, a detailed and in-depth analysis of extant literatures revealed differences, in how functional attributes of competencies are granulated as competency in PSM, which contributes to the understanding of the conception of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes.

5.2.1 Ways of experiencing competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, levels of comprehensiveness and the relationship between them

The qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes are perceived, and varied in terms of a level of comprehensiveness. PMs in ELG were aware that experience starts from personal thoughts on how to approach every CM and SS process situations at (level 0 horizon). These thoughts migrated to the least comprehensive focus of awareness, of stakeholder management (Category One). Category One rests on the same level as Category Two (socio-technical knowledge), which creates a challenge through the enabler (level 1) factors such as data, technology, market intelligence and performance whilst also being engulfed in a dynamic, changing environment (the work process level) as a nested comprehensive hierarchical structure.

These levels are required as a consideration of the need to engage and start stakeholder management and of what social, technological, and organisational factors to consider. Competency for accomplishing effective job performance was experienced both objectively and subjectively, as something both internal and external. However, the relationship of Category Two to Category One is such that in order to manage stakeholders in Category One (Stakeholder Management), PMs in

ELG needed to have the required functional attributes, which then creates a relationship with Category Two needs, which are to balance and integratethe social, technological and organisational factors necessary for creating the engagement and management of the stakeholders, through the antecedent underlying characteristics of competency (motive, knowledge and skills) and the formation, organisation and shaping of the functional attributes, such as information seeking and communication.

In order to acquire the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, PMs in ELG needed to go through the challenges of the enablers (level 1) and the work processes (level 2). In Category Three (achievement orientation), the PMs in ELG had to be able to interpret, react to and execute tasks, by using all of the characteristics of competency (motive, traits, self-concept, knowledge, and skills) to form, organise and shape functional attributes such as communication and information seeking at the direction setting level horizon, which creates the focus for the purpose of competency accomplishment for effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

The structure of awareness for Category One (stakeholder management), Category Two (socio-technical knowledge) and Category Three (achievement orientation) demonstrated that individuals, with their experiences of competency, were aware of the focal points of each category (engaging and managing; balancing and integrating and interpreting, reacting, and executing) through the underlying characteristics of competency (motive, traits, self-concept, knowledge and skills). This awareness of the underlying characteristics of competency in PSM including the disciplines of CM and SS, according to Bals et al., (2019: 3), is an “intersection between competencies and traits” and gave examples of dealing "with ambiguity; curiosity; and passion”, whilst being clustered as a conception of competency labelled “interpersonal skill”.

These findings are supported by the contention of Eltantawy et al., (2014: 4) that CM and SS processes are a “mind-set” in that “it is how you approach many of the procurement tasks that you are doing each day (sourcing, contracting, supplier relationship management, etc.) but optimizing them proactively and intentionally drives them with the right planning, the right resources and the right strategy”.

The implication here is that PMs in ELG in the present study are all very highly qualified, with a mixture of experience both in the commercial and public sector environment, and therefore have a deep understanding of the practice of CM and SS processes. Hence, the PMs in ELG have an awareness of the interconnectivity that exists or is necessary between the focal points (engaging and managing; balancing and integration; and interpreting, reacting, and executing) as drivers of the way they experience competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

5.2.2 A varying comprehensive relationship

The findings of this study provide new insight into the relationship between PMs in ELG and competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The study revealed that the relationship is not simple in that the PMs in ELG, who participated in the study think about the conception of competency in varying ways. They are aware of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes in the organisational environment in which they work, with an example being working cross-functionally through stakeholders, core team and sponsorship, whilst also having an awareness of “subject matter experts (SME) as an enabler”, as observed by Albertson (2017: 3). Participants are also aware of the issue of effectiveness of cross-functional sourcing teams and that, as Gelderman and Semeijn (2017: 4) state, “teams with greater interpersonal cohesiveness showed more personal and open communication and greater informal frequency of within-team communication”. They also think of competency as constituting the personal characteristics required to deliver the processes and the ability to cope with elements such as resources, competencies, capability, services, supply chain members and perceived value. Rafati et al., (2015: 7, 2016: 8) state that “operant resources (motives, traits, self-concepts, effectively personal competencies) are usually intangible, dynamic and active resources that act upon other resources to create benefits, e.g. knowledge, skills”. They are the essential component of differentiation and the fundamental source of “competitive advantage that acts to enhance “organizational core competencies”, and “integrates superior resources into specific benefit” (Rafati et al., 2016: 4; 2018: 6). PMs in LGA also think about competency in terms of certain situations as involving dealing with the buyers-supplier power resources “(buyer dominance), market (interdependence), alliance (interdependence) and Dependence (supplier dominance)” as expressed by Allott (2017:11).

5.2.2.1 Value and valence of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes

Competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is valued by PMs in ELG, and the valence of having such a mature capacity, capability, and repertoire of competency characteristics is fulfilling. The participants recognised that competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes aided them to deliver activities and tasks in CM and SS processes and to reach the highest position in their career, hence the participants recognised the need to acquire competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes in their organisation.

In the organisational context, assuming additional responsibilities requires to some extent, some form of display of competency that helped to propel their career progression and for some new experiences to take place.

A mixture of commercial and public sector knowledge, skills and other characteristics of competency were summed up by participants as important and integral in terms of competency. Appreciation of the value of competency was also summed up as important by some participants. In the context of CM and SS processes, the participants regarded competency for accomplishing effective job performance as the need to employ all aspects of their personal dispositional characteristics as valuable in order to deliver value in the processes. This comment is supported by Rafati and Poels (2016: 4) who stated that "competency (singular)" and competencies (plural) as stated by Bals et al., (2019: 2), are "seen as the firm's specific strengths that allows a company to gain competitive advantage".

5.2.2.2 Thinking about competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes

Different underlying characteristics of competency and their associated functional attributes were considered important in various contexts. In the context of CM and SS processes, competency was thought about as something you will need to be involved in heavily, in the reviewing of what goes on, as something that you can't learn from a textbook, as something that you learn off the cuff and as something you have to develop, such as a personal approach. Competency is thought about in terms of experience, or in other words doing it and allowing it to become natural, while acquiring a mixture of experiences. According to Anagnoste (2018: 7), there has been an “underestimating of the skills required for category management in terms of contract creation, updates and management of contract and the ongoing contract compliance and monitoring in strategic sourcing”.

All of these statements were clearly demonstrated in Category One (stakeholder management) as the ability to engage and manage, and in Category Two (socio-technical knowledge), as an ability to balance and interpret the social, technological and organisational factors. An example of this is the “robotic and automation of processes” and the implications for category management in terms of “automating the categorization and processing of spend categories to set strategy and monitor performance”, and in addition the “automation of supplier market research and analysis and identifying and selecting suppliers based on predefined criteria as in strategic sourcing” (Anagnoste (2018: 7). In Category Three (achievement orientation), the ability to interpret, react, and execute tasks, are all proceeded by the underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge, skills), which are responsible for the make-up of the functional attributes. In the extant literature, aspects of the competency for ‘achievement orientation’ are seen as: “accomplishing objectives through influence”, clustered as: “leadership skills” (Levenson et al., 2006: 3); and “results focus driving for result”, clustered as: “interpersonal skills” (Tassabehji and Moorhouse, 2008: 6). The disparities in the clustering of the competency for ‘achievement orientation’, accentuate the role played by the preceding underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge, skills) found in this study.

5.2.2.3 Commonly held assumptions challenged

A number of commonly held assumptions were challenged by the findings. The research highlighted the fact that PMs in English LGAs thought about and considered competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes to a degree that has not always been acknowledged in the literature. In addition, the findings challenged a number of assumptions that have been made about the ways in which PMs in ELG relate to competency.

An example of this is displayed within Category Three (achievement orientation), where PMs in ELG described in detail how they went about delivering and showing competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. This is far from being a “re-active and passive” activity requiring no effort as suggested by Dutton (2011: 28). PMs in ELG described the effort and thoughts needed on the part of the individual as intuition, in which they examine their personal disposition for the underlying characteristics of competency (motive, traits, self-concepts, knowledge, skills) needed for the approach. This is to aid the formation, organisation and shaping of the required functional attributes such as information seeking and communication, which are needed for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

They explained that the way in which they experienced competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes sometimes entails participating with the customer when undergoing the evaluation of a model of the intended product to be purchased, so as to underpin their projection of a reduction of cost. This has not previously been stated in the literature. The participants even described how they think CM and SS processes do not really require having to go through a learning cycle, and that you just need to do it because as you become better at it, you do it intuitively, and you gain hierarchical niche and self-esteem. This, again, provides new insights.

This study has enabled PMs in ELG to elucidate the reasons for some of their actions regarding competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

The varying ways of experiencing competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes described in the present study, highlights the comprehensiveness that PMs in ELG have to undergo in the way that they relate to competency. This relationship of comprehensiveness, as observed in the study data, contradicts the assumption in traditional phenomenographic study that conceptions of phenomenon are hierarchical However, Green (2005) contends that “voices should not assume that phenomenographic categories are necessarily hierarchical” and that “such relationships need to be represented in the way they are found in the transcript data rather than simply through some reflective, logical analysis by the researcher” (Green, 2005: 43). The underpinning of hierarchical inclusiveness lies in the data, i.e. what the interviewees say. The issue is that when researchers position their personal experience and analyses in a dominant position regardless of the original transcripts, it becomes a problem, which according to Åkerlind et al., (2005: 95) confirms that hierarchy “is not one based on value judgements of better and worse ways of understanding, but on evidence of some categories being inclusive of others”. Also, Åkerlind et al., (2005: 95) further contend that a linear hierarchical structure is not always possible; on the contrary, “forks and branches in the hierarchical structure are also common”. In this sense, the discovery of the interviewees’ sense of comprehensiveness of the competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes is evidently justifiable.

The conceptions identified in this study not only demonstrate the complexity of the experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, but they also point to the possibility of there being something new to discover,

5.2.3 Procurement managers (PMs) in English local government (ELG): underlying characteristics of competency as an antecedent for the formation of functional attributes

Findings from this study offer a new insight and add to the body of knowledge on the underlying characteristics of competency as preceding the formation of functional attributes, for instance in information seeking and communications.

PMs in ELG who participated in the study demonstrated what they think about competency for accomplishing effective job performance in CM and SS processes, in that they were aware of the processes and developed strategies for delivering them. For instance, some experienced the underlying characteristics of competency (motives, knowledge and skills) as an antecedent for the formation of the functional attributes *'information seeking'* and 'c*ommunication*' of the conception 'st*akeholder management'*, aligning it to what they do first when confronted with a new service to be provided and delivered. This is supported by a statement made by Bals et al., (2019: 7): "know your stakeholder intimately and their business objectives in terms of assurance of supply, regulatory compliance, quality, service and cost". For instance, some experienced the functional attributes *'information seeking'* and *'communication'* within the conception 'socio-technical knowledge', preceded by the underlying characteristics of competency (motives). Whereas, in some of the experiences of PMs in ELG, the functional attributes '*information seeking'* and *'communication'* are proceeded to interpret, react, and execute as the focus for the conception (achievement orientation), and which in turn is preceded by the underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge, skills), as the antecedent for the formation of the functional attributes. This is supported by Schleper et al., (2019: 118), who state that it is advantageous to take "a portfolio approach by way of knowing your targets and having a plan to get there, getting the project teed up and leveraging available resources".

In conclusion, PMs in ELG have given wide-ranging new insights into how competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is understood.

5.3 Contribution to phenomenography

In terms of data collection, this study reinforces that it is a sound method to explore people's conceptions of something in an indirect way, in the initial phase of the interview, as Bowden (2005) advises. Many phenomenographic researchers often choose to ask the interviewees questions in a direct way, for instance: "what do you mean by competency?". While this is theoretically the core question for learning conception studies, interviewees may find it difficult to answer. Having realised the weakness, the researcher added some indirect questions into the formal interview. For instance, the researcher asked PMs in ELG to describe a project they recently undertook and approaches they liked and did not like, and why. The researcher found that there were several merits in doing this. Firstly, this enabled the atmosphere to become more friendly and relaxed as a result of such questions, and PMs in ELG felt more comfortable to say more. Secondly, while answering these indirect questions, interviewees were also organising their own thoughts on competency. The answers to these questions formed the basis for their understanding of competency, and it could be contended that answering the indirect questions made their arguments on competency clearer and and more convincing. Thirdly, this method could also ensure the faithfulness of statements made by PMS in ELG, because PMs in ELG followed up their previous answers and responses to the indirect questions. Therefore, the study suggests that while using the interview as a research technique, indirect questions can play an important role in eliciting people's conceptions of certain phenomena, and therefore should be utilised.

Previous researchers (Cope, 2004; Francis, 1993) have criticised phenomenography for its lack of transparency in analysing and interpreting the data and for the fact that phenomenographic researchers seldom emphasise this sufficiently. Therefore, Ashworth and Lucas (1998) recommend that the reporting of phenomenographic studies should be more explicit about the analytical process. Although several authors (Dahlgren and Fallsberg, 1991; Sjöström and Dahlgren, 2002) attempted to clarify and standardise some procedures within the process, it seems that few tried to specify steps in combination with an analytical framework, and its role has often been ignored. In contrast, a referential and structural framework is deliberately employed in this study, and a detailed procedure of data analysis has been presented using this interpretive tool. In addition, the present study also used other interpretative tools such as McBer's Scaled Competency Dictionary (1996) as reproduced by Raven and Stevenson (2001); the SHL Universal Competency Framework (Batram, 2002); and the Big Five Personality Traits model (Barrick and Mount, 1991), to elucidate the interview data for the purpose of defining functional attributes.

This study confirms that using the referential/structural framework to analyse conceptions of learning is both helpful and beneficial in phenomenographic research. The framework could help to provide insights into the nature and characteristics of each competency conception, as well as guaranteeing the quality of developing conceptions. By explicitly employing this theoretical framework, this study pays close attention to not only the variations in but also to the nature of the experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The identification of the meaning aspect as well as the internal horizon and external horizon enables deep and profound thinking. A particular conception is not what the researcher thinks it should be, rather it ought to include clear referential and structural aspects and the relationship therein. Only in this way can it be named as a conception. Such an identification process, to some extent, assures the rigour of phenomenographic study.

Finally, introducing phenomenography to public sector procurement and supply management organisations expands the research scope and context of this approach. Phenomenographic studies have been carried out on conceptions of competency as a practical way of investigating conceptions of a phenomenon mainly in the educational context (Goh, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2017; Kottunen, 2015 and 2017), without further exploration of the antecedence preceding the formation of the functional attributes. In this sense, this study extends the research context of phenomenography. The phenomenographic approach is used not only to explore the conception of competency in the field of PSM, but also to examine the relationship between the underlining characteristics of competency and the phenomenon and the antecedence for the formation of attributes associated with the competency. This study also calls for the necessity of enriching phenomenographic study in this area, due to the unprecedented development of CM and SS processes in the field of purchasing and supply management, especially in public sector procurement including within local government authorities.

5.4 Contribution to procurement and supply management (PSM) research

The contributions of this study to the procurement and supply management research field, of which category management and strategic sourcing processes are disciplines, are twofold.

Firstly, the contribution of this study to PSM research field, resides in phenomenographic competency conception studies in the context of public sector procurement, including local government. Research in the field of PSM is a particular area that "draws from a broad range of disciplines and research domains" (Bals et al., 2019: 2). The research approach and methodology have not significantly changed over time. Since the phenomenographic approach has seldom been linked to the PSM field, this study attempts to introduce phenomenography as a research approach to study competency conceptions in a public procurement environment, including within local government. The employment of a phenomenographic approach as shown in this study, has been proven to be fruitful. Based on the contribution to the understanding of conceptions of competency, this research manifests that a phenomenographic competency conception study conducted in a particular public procurement environment, including within a local government context will provide useful insight. New competency conceptions are found and also new insights into familiar and well-established conceptions are provided.

Secondly, the focus on the conceptions of competency of PMs in ELG demonstrates that there is another way to research PSM, that is, through a micro-level investigation. While the body of extant literature on various aspects of PSM is growing, many studies are dominated by political, institutional and organisational perspectives, whereas less studies concern “the distinction between positive (“what is”) and normative (“what should be”) public procurement practice, and the conditions that support and impede individuals transitioning between these practices” (McKevitt et al., 2014: 2). Even fewer have been undertaken from a micro-level, investigating the perspective of PMs in LGAs (Bals et al., 2019). Bals et al., (2019: 3) states that researchers “need to make a shift in stance from an overall external perspective to a relational (non-dualistic) and experience-based perspective”. This study advocates the argument of Bals et al., (2019) and uncovers the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, by taking a second-order perspective. The researcher argues that the principal professionals of CM and SS processes are the PMs in ELG, who are the ultimate practitioners and therefore, conceptions of competency in the practice of CM and SS processes from this group's perspective should be known.

5.4.1 Contribution to PSM knowledge: comparison of the study findings to the Bals et al., (2019) framework

In order to underpin the research contribution of this study, the researcher discusses the research question one: *what are the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes?*. This is related to the most recent empirical study on the subject of competency and competencies for future procurement professionals in purchasing and supply management (PSM). The findings from this research study are compared with Bals et al.'s (2019) framework.

5.4.1.1 Granularity (clustering) process and aggregation result

Many of the functional attributes in this present research study are closely related or very similar to those identified by Bals et al., (2019) as well as those that appear within Tassabehji and Moorhouse's (2008) framework,. Bals et al., (2019) and Tassabehji and Moorhouse (2008) clustered the functional attributes as: technical skills, interpersonal skills, internal/external enterprise skills and strategic business skills, but in the present study, the functional attributes revealed through the research were granulated as stakeholder management; socio-technical knowledge; and achievement orientation. In the present study, the findings further identified the underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge and skills) and related the underlying characteristics to each of the granulated categories. The researcher was surprised that Bals et al., (2019) identified some additional competencies which were not presented by Tassabehji and Moorhouse (2008) such as: curiosity, dealing with ambiguity, humility, mobility, openness, open-mindedness, passion, resilience, self-confidence, self-reflection and reliance, but did not consider these attributes as constituting underlying characteristics (motives, traits, self-concepts) and clustered as “inter-personal skills”. This is in comparison with the present study, which identified the elements of the competencies in the interview data and classified them appropriately to give an insight into the importance of all of the underlying characteristics of competency, as shown in Figure 41 below:

Figure 41: Comparison of competency granularity (clusters)
of Tassabehji and Moorhouse (2008), Bals et al., (2019) and the present research findings (2020)

Competency cluster (based on Tassabehji and Moorhouse (2008)	**Competency cluster and additional competency resulting out of their study** (Based on Bals et al., 2019)	**Competency granulation (based on present research study 2020)**	**Characteristics of Competency** Motive	Traits	Self-Concept	Knowledge	Skills
Technical Skills	**Technical Skills** ▪Big data, Analytical, ▪Automation ▪Innovation Sourcing ▪Innovative Sourcing approaches	**Stakeholder Management** (Ability to engage and manage) ●Relationship Building ●Information Seeking ●Communication ●Influencing ●Maintaining Integrity ●Building Trust ●Reflective Awareness ●Adaptability ●Bring New Opportunities ●Building Trust & Reputation ●Understanding Power of Supplier	√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √	√ √	√ √ √	√	√
Inter personal Skills	**Interpersional Skills** ▪Curosity; ▪Deal with Ambiguity; ▪Humility; ▪Mobility; ▪Openness, Open-Minded; ▪Passion; ▪Resilience; ▪Self confidence ▪Critical thinking; ▪Holistic supply chain thinking; ▪Sustainability; ▪Self-Reflection; ▪Self-Reliance	**Socio-Technical Knowledge** (Ability to balance and integrate) ●Analytical thinking ●Professional value Awareness ●Information Seeking ●Knowledge Acquisition ●Project Management Knowledge ●Analytical Knowledge ●Conceptual thinking ●Knowledge management & Sharing ●Thinking Strategically ●Being Innovative ●Using Techniques & Tools ●Using Technology ●Organizing ●Communication ●System thinking ●Problem Solving ●Enduring Capabilities & Motivation	√ √ √ √	√	√ √ √	√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √	√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √
Strategic Busioness Skills	**Strategic Busioness Skills** ▪Curosity; ▪Deal with Ambiguity; ▪Humility; ▪Mobility; ▪Openness, Open-Minded; ▪Passion; ▪Resilience; ▪Self confidence ▪Critical thinking; ▪Holistic supply chain thinking; ▪Sustainability; ▪Self-Reflection; ▪Self-Reliance	**Achievement Orientation** (Ability to interpret, react and execute) ●Change Management ●Using Cognitive abilities ●Generating Initiatives ●Team Leadership ●Making Decisions ●Being Resilient ●Communication ●Executing	√ √ √ √ √ √ √	√ √ √	√ √ √ √ √ √ √	√ √ √ √ √	√ √ √ √ √ √ √

The present research study concludes that the underlying characteristics of competency plays an important role as an antecedence to the formation, organisation, and structure of the functional attributes, required for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes.

5.5 Implications for competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of category management and strategic sourcing processes

5.5.1 Implications for research

The CM and SS processes in ELG are an important implementation strategy of PSM in the public sector, including within English local government organisations. A review of the literature indicates that within the research area of PSM, academics focus intensively on the macro level (core competencies), mainly in the private sector. Researchers are interested in ‘big issues’ such as digitisation (e.g. ‘e-procurement, ‘technology’ and ‘automation’), innovation (e.g. ‘Innovative sourcing’) and sustainability (Bals et al., 2019), but the essence ultimately lies in ‘small issues’ such as competency and competencies, which are the key elements for understanding the impact of the implementation of CM and SS processes (Csaki, 2010; McKevitt et al., 2014; Kihanya, 2015; Orumwense, 2017 and Bals et al., 2019). Competency in public procurement is observed by Orumwense (2017: 2) as the “critical success factors within human capability, in a process that uses pooling and aggregation, in an institution that is centralised and with a strategic focus for value for money and an operational factor that is standardised”. In a way, the present research complements micro-level analysis with micro-level investigation. The final result obtained may be optimistic because quantitative conceptions have a more dominant position. In terms of statistics, the number of statements made by procurement managers in ELG during the interviews that expressed Conception A (stakeholder management) was 401, for Conception B (socio-technical knowledge) was 1708 and for Conception C (achievement orientation) was 544.

As an important category of competency conceptions, cognitive and analytical quantitative conceptions are indispensable and do have a significant function, hence the reason for the domination of the statements made by the interviewees being expressed in those terms. However, it is not problematic to see expressions of Conception B (socio-technical knowledge) dominating, as the activities involved in CM and SS processes are "service-led", customer-led and project-led but with a high degree of personal and individual dispositional underpinning required in order to "achieve value creation" (Rafati and Poels, 2016: 6). As discussed in Chapter 4, the conception of competency of PMs in ELG, including within local government organisations, will influence their competency approaches and further the quality of competency as a whole as demonstrated by a number of researchers (Volcker, 2016; Knight et al., 2014; Kurz and Bartram, 2002; Tassabehji and Moorhouee, 2008; McKevitt et al., 2014 and Bals et al., 2019).

The qualitative or transformative conceptions facilitate a deep approach to competency, with PMs in ELG more likely to engage in a variety of procurement practices (Cabineti et al., 2006). More sophisticated conceptions should be developed if a deep approach to the variety of procurement practices within the CM and SS disciplines is to be achieved.

5.5.2 Implications for procurement professionals practicing CM and SS processes

This present research study suggest that a more transformative way of understanding competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is required from procurement professionals in the public sector including local government organisations. . The object of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is the “development of a certain powerful way of experiencing the phenomenon in question” (Bals et al., 2019: 4). It is necessary to improve the purchasing and supply organisational environment in order to achieve, in terms of the CM process (Bals et al., 2018). Efforts ought to be made in terms of procurement taking on new responsibilities and being increasingly engaged in the development and provision of market offerings. The skill profiles of purchasing managers are changing in these organisations, and as new responsibilities are becoming increasingly important, traditional skills related to purchasing such as CM and SS are increasingly taken on by others in the supply network (Anderson et al., 2018).

Public sector procurement practitioners working in the area of CM and SS are advised to accept the proposition that competency may be understood or experienced in a qualitatively distinct way and that accomplishing effective job performance through the meaning of competency is better than competency utilised to pick up pieces of knowledge in order to satisfy external requirements (Bowden, 1990; Trigwell et al., 2005). Phenomenographic researchers contend that the improvement or development of competency is viewed as “the widening of a person's ways of experiencing or understanding the object of a phenomenon” (Paakkariet al., 2015: 12). Educators should be aware of the importance of PMs (practitioners in CM and SS) and the way in which this group comprehend competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS, and that it is both appropriate and possible for CM and SS practices to upgrade these conceptions to a more sophisticated level, in order to enable PMs to see their competency in a “qualitatively more advanced, powerful, or complex” way (Paakkariet al., 2015, 12). The success of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes relies on practitioners understanding PMs in terms of competency, and how the practitioners can facilitate competency in more advanced ways. Practice is expected to expand PMs' competency awareness so that it can be developed and moved to a higher level, and therefore the expansion of conception can be achieved (Åkerlind, 2008).

The holistic picture of the qualitatively different experiences of PMs offers the potential to change the approach to CM and SS practices. The variations of competency conceptions identified in this study can help to facilitate the improvement and reform of CM and SS. Educators are advised to take into account the findings made in this research when designing CM and SS training courses. The aim is to make sure that the objectives of the training and the levels of understanding which PMs must achieve are clearly stated (Lau, 2010).

In conclusion, advancing conceptions of competency is challenging and there seems to be no unique solution, but it is necessary to construct a productive purchasing and supply organisation (PSO) environment and to integrate all forms of mode of practice approaches and assessment, in order to facilitate the achievement of high-level competency conceptions.   Only in such an environment can PMs in ELG be able to advance their conceptions of competency (Lau (2010).

5.5.3 Implications for practice

From a managerial perspective, the implications of these findings are to set out the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for CM and SS processes that could form part of how practitioners in CM and SS practice granulate the various competencies as outlined in CM and SS framework for the delivery of value for money services. The findings can be used as an input into how to organise competency models or mapping activities for job analysis by way of achieving the proper 'level of granularity' (Campion et al., 2011) and inform the alignment of relevant HR systems.

The results also have implications for educational and managerial training, knowledge management and changes in teaching methods and content. For instance, by looking at the three competency categories and the distribution of the associated functional attributes, along with their underlying characteristics of competency as identified in this research study and complimented by the frameworks developed by Tassabehaji and Moorhouse (2008) and Bals et al., (2019), the researcher will argue that these need to be reflected in curricula and training programs. There is evidence in peer-reviewed literature that PSM bachelor and masters courses do not, with limited exceptions, cover intrapersonal learning objectives (Bals et al., 2019; Lau, 2010; Waller et al., 2008). Additionally, competency needed in the key areas of socio-technical knowledge such as data management through automation and digitalisation and sustainability, should be more fully integrated into higher and professional education and professional industrial training programmes. Furthermore, the present study outlines the type of competency needed to be taken into consideration, as current training and teaching methods are not necessarily suitable for developing competency and associated functional attributes necessary for CM and SS processes, and the pedagogy needs to be adapted to reflect these requirements. Specifically, different training methods are needed when developing competency and its associated functional attributes in the socio-technical knowledge cluster in comparison to those in other clusters. Fostering shared experiences highlights the potential of in-class training formats such as role play, and the potential for online courses including the use of webinars (online conference forums), or other online meeting facilities such as Zoom or

Microsoft Teams to facilitate more interactive formats. The meta-oriented competency cluster reasoning presented in this research study suggests that training employees in how to develop and apply these kinds of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use CM and SS processes may be key in sustaining performance over time, under rapidly changing contextual factors.

5.6 Limitations of the research

In reflecting on the research as a whole, the researcher was aware that there are several limitations of this study, some of which might have to do with the research approach adopted, while others are relevant to the research context.

The first limitation is the inability to explain why PMs in ELG had certain conceptions. Phenomenographic studies are not tasked with exploring the reasons for certain conceptions held by participants, because “phenomenography does not gather data which would allow it to attribute cause nor is it interested in why PMs in ELG may possess certain conceptions of a phenomenon" (Lucas, 1998: 28). Similarly, Säljö (1988: 37) contends that “assumptions concerning the possible source of variations in conceptions held by people are postponed and considered as an issue for the theoretical framework utilised in a specific research project". Although the participants’ statements may indicate and explain the reasons for perceiving the phenomenon in a certain way, Lucas (1998: 30) argues that researchers cannot view them as causes; they are merely "part of the meaning of the matter under investigation within the experience” of PMs in ELG.

Åkerlind (2005a: 7) states that the nature of phenomenographic analysis is “descriptive or interpretive rather than explanatory”, that is, the focus lies in “investigating what sort of differences in meaning and understanding occur across individuals rather than to attempt to explain or investigate causes of these differences" (Åkerlind, 2005a: 8). Dahlin (2007: 328) contends that a basic assumption in phenomenography is that "describing conceptions was not the same as describing reality, or the possible reasons why people held certain conceptions" and it does not "belong to phenomenography proper, which made a clear distinction between a first-order perspective, studying reality, and a second-order perspective, studying conceptions of reality". Nonetheless, Lucas (1998: 30) considers that despite the deficiencies, the conceptions found in phenomenographic studies provide a point of departure from subsequent research "on the cause of such conceptions and how they might be changed", upheld, or improved.

The second limitation is the single and limited disciplinary context. The background in this study is set within CM and SS processes, a business-related subject. The research findings capture the variations in the conceptions of competency of PMs in ELG, in terms of accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. As an implementation strategy of procurement within public sector organisations including in an English local government authority context, the CM and SS processes cover a wide range of tasks and activities, involving other disciplines such as contract management and supply relationship management.

However, the current study only focuses on the most prolific subject of public sector procurement, which implies a limited disciplinary scope. While this research maps a general picture of the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency in general, the question of how PMs in ELG in different disciplines perceive their competency remains unknown. Conceptions of competency in a general sense, which is the central concern for this study, might be influenced by the disciplines that procurement managers are practitioners in.

The third limitation is relevant to the inherent subjectivity of the analytical procedure. Like most phenomenographic competency conception studies, the present research is qualitative in nature. Even though data has been collected through reflective and in-depth interviews and interpreted in an iterative and comparative way, the research subjects or interviewees are limited in number. Moreover, it "suffers from the inherent subjectivity of the analytical procedure" (Makoe et al., 2007: 307). As Entwistle (1997b: 128) notes, quantitative researchers often "question the subjectivity involved in establishing categories of description". The creation of the *Conception of Competency Inventory* renders it feasible to obtain research competency conceptions from a quantitative paradigm. While a majority of studies on conceptions of competency from the phenomenographic perspective are undertaken with small samples, it is expected that the questionnaire could play an important role in large-scale surveys. The results of such mass investigations can provide a basis for the improvement of conceptual change in public procurement practice (Bals et al., 2019). New competency conceptions might also be found if the paradigm is changed, as conceptions of competency depend on the instrument used for measurement (Campion et al., 2011).

The fourth limitation concerns the interpretative theory and method developed in this present research. This can be used to identify, describe and analyse conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. Taking the underlying characteristics of competency as a point of departure makes it possible to more fully describe, analyse and understand what constitutes conceptions of competency and how attributes are formed, developed, organised and shaped into distinctive structures of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. The findings in this research study and other interpretative studies on competency such as Boyatzis et al., (1974), Boyatzis (1982 and 2007) and Stenberg and Kolligian (1990) suggest that one of the positions taken for defining competency lies within the underlying attributes of a person. Hogg (1989) suggests that competencies from which competency is derived are context specific and that competency embodies the capacity for the transfer of skills and abilities from one area to another. If this argument prevails, it means that if similar conceptions could be identified and analysed in another job area, they would express different competencies. For example, conceiving competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes in terms of 'stakeholder management' might mean engaging and managing emerging issues separately and sequentially and taking the underlying characteristics of competency as the starting point, hence, allowing for the appropriate reconciliation of the formation, organisation and shaping of the required functional attribute, and the conception of competency for a new job situation. This argument creates an empirical question as to whether or not conceptions identified and analysed in one job area or context are applicable to another. Therefore, further empirical studies similar to the present research are needed in order to explore the possibilities of generalising, identifying, and analysing conceptions within other job areas. Moreover, being able to identify and analyse similar ways of experiencing competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes could also be a way to further enrich the understanding of conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance more generally.

The fifth limitation concerns the possible sources of variation in conceptions. In this present research study, the sources of variation were investigated in terms of formal education and length of job experience in CM and SS processes and also in terms of pattern of variation, using characteristics of pattern of variation.

The variation in terms of formal education and length of job experience in CM and SS processes shows that this relates to the link between the conception 'stakeholder management' and the length of job experience in CM and SS processes, where, those with over ten years' experience in CM and SS processes did not express the conception 'stakeholder management*.* The argument for this limitation is about the level of delimitation to awareness and consciousness following many years of experiencing the same factor in the job area and job situation. The second source of variation relates to the pattern of variation, which showed a link between the conceptions (stakeholder management, socio-technical knowledge and achievement orientation) and the attributes in one area of the characteristics of pattern of variation: generalising (or in other words, experiencing a varied appearance of the same value). The limitations concern to what extent the remaining characteristics of pattern of variation (contrast: which means recognising values of an aspect; separation: which means separating aspects with varying values from invariant aspects; and fusion: which means experiencing several critical aspects simultaneously), are present in the conception of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. Therefore, further empirical studies similar to the present research study are needed to explore the possibilities of generalising identified conceptions.

The sixth limitation concerns the relationship between the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG, in terms of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes and the identification of the existence of the underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge, and skills) using critical incident events. The findings of this research study and of other interpretative studies in terms of identifying competency, such as the works of Mitchell and Boak (2009) and Vathanophas et al., (2007), suggest that critical incident events could be used to identify the existence of competency. Even if apparently similar conceptions and their underlying characteristics of competency could be identified in critical situations, it is difficult to predict individual behaviour, in terms of performance, and consequently the future of behaviour is difficult to predict. For example, conceiving competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes as 'st*akeholder management', socio-technical knowledge', and 'achievement orientation'* constitutes clusters of 'm*otives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge and skills*' as antecedents and their associated attributes might be identified, organised, and shaped differently, in different situations.

Whether or not conceptions identified and organised as a cluster of the underlying characteristics of competency are transferable to other situations is ultimately an empirical question. Furthermore, a focus on the conceptions of competency of PMs in ELG in terms of accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes as constituting clusters of underlying characteristics of competency, and for developing competency, has many further implications for a range of activities undertaken by PMs in ELG including recruiting, staffing, appraising employee performance, and managing careers, pay systems and motivational strategies for improving performance.

All of these activities can facilitate or constrain the competency that is developed and maintained in local government organisations. The research findings suggest that such activities undertaken by PMs in ELG should be designed and conducted in a way that actively promotes changes in conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes. Moreover, since organisational culture and governance creates direction setting, work processes creating dynamics and enablers creating challenges also have an impact on the way in which competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes is developed and maintained.

5.7 What is Surprising?

What is surprising in this research thesis and from the subsequent findings is that the most central implications emerging from the findings of this study concern the underlying characteristics of competency, rather than attributes. This has created a shift, and this shift makes it possible to capture how certain attributes are delimited as essential and organised into a distinctive structure of competency, as experienced in the workplace by PMs in English LGAs. For developing competency, such a shift makes it possible to actively promote the development of particular conceptions of the underlying characteristics of competency, and its specific attributes for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes in the workplace.

5.8 Recommendations for future research

The research context and disciplinary background can be altered so that readers can understand competency conceptions for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes from a more holistic perspective.

The present research was conducted within the environment of CM and SS processes being utilised as a commercial business tool in ELG, due to its implementation over the past decade in the public sector, including within English local government. Since the adoption of CM and SS processes as a commercial business tool in the public sector, very little empirical research has been conducted in the discipline on the necessary competency and competencies needed for delivering services in the public sector (Bals et al., 2019). Research studies within the extant literature have also argued about the tension that exists in research on the overemphasis of acquiring specialised “knowledge” rather than shaping individual “identity” (Mckevitt et al., 2014: 2).

Further research could examine and contrast the similarities and differences of other disciplines in terms of the results. It would also be of interest if future researchers blurred the disciplinary boundaries by recruiting participants across a range of disciplines within the same domain of category management, such as from within contract management and supplier relationship management.

The appropriateness of the semi-structured in-depth interviews used in this study has been demonstrated. The participants could thoroughly discuss and analyse their statements by responding to both primary and follow-up questions, and through their answers were able to clarify and reflect on the interviewer’s instant inquiries in a timely fashion and in depth. However, this does not exclude alternative research methods; for example, open-ended scenario questions could be utilised as a sound alternative in order to investigate a larger number of subjects, in this case, procurement managers.

Future researchers may choose to ask PMs to write an essay on their experience of a certain phenomenon. However, they may have to bear in mind that writing may limit the opportunity to ask the participants to expand on their experiences of certain issues.

Future researchers may consider findings from this present study, which suggests that competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes can be organized into five types of underlying characteristics of competency (motives, traits, self-concepts, knowledge, and skills),   This also creates an individual sense of effective job performance in terms of the utilisation of CM and SS processes. This is particularly important in the context of public sector procurement, where the local government supplier market is large-scale and the issues are dynamic.

Future research could be designed in a more dynamic way. Some qualitatively different conceptions of a particular group of PMs in ELG, in terms of accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes, have been revealed in the present research. The research participants expressed their conceptualisation of competency at a specific point in time and in a specific context, which implies a strong static characteristic. The different ways of experiencing or conceptions arrived at in phenomenographic research are unable to depict and reflect on some dynamic changes in terms of practice experience, understanding and conceptualisation. Instead, they are simply snapshots that reflect the selected participants at a specific time. Åkerlind et al., (2005: 81), similarly contends that transcripts only represent "a snapshot of the ways of experiencing the phenomenon by a particular group of people at a particular time and in response to a particular situation”. Nevertheless, it is likely that conceptions may be developed and change over time, allowing PMs to understand their dispositional characteristics as a starting point and respond appropriately to the consequences inherent in the situation. This state of awareness is necessary, especially in the context of CM and SS processes in LGAs, where the principal subjects are individuals relating to numerous objects of contention, within a dynamic environment, and this could also be researched and verified by phenomenography (Eklund-Myrskog, 1998). Thus, it is expected that future phenomenographic studies could be designed to be more dynamic in order to examine the changing or developing ways of experiencing something. The results of such research may have strong implications for improving the quality of the practice of category management and strategic sourcing processes.

5.8.1 Recommendation on further research as it relates to other procurement professionals practising CM and SS processes

As a result of this research study, a picture of the way in which PMs in ELG experience competency in terms of accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes has been developed. However, the research also revealed the incompleteness of this picture and suggests the need for further research. The following recommendations grew out of the present research study:

- To replicate the research with procurement practitioners of different disciplines within the field of procurement and supply management such as:
  - Cohorts of all commercial procurement managers;
  - Cohorts of category managers
  - Cohorts of strategic sourcing managers
  - Cohorts of commissioning managers; and
  - Cohorts of strategic procurement managers with no specific specialisation.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has reflected upon various aspects of the research study and how the phenomenographic research approach employed has addressed the research question, as well as investigating the limitations of the study. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations have been made for PSM professionals practising category management and strategic sourcing processes and educators in the field, and recommendations for further research have been suggested.

By employing a phenomenographic research approach, this study has detailed the qualitatively different experiences of PMs in ELG in terms of competency for CM and SS processes within the context of public procurement. This study has also outlined the kind of variation that exists between these experiences and the identification of the existence of the underlying characteristics of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes.

It is the researcher's hope that the findings and the approach adopted will prove useful as providing an interpretative understanding and method for identifying, describing and analysing what constitutes the conception of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes in the workplace. Hopefully, the analysis and the description of conceptions of competency for accomplishing effective job performance through the use of CM and SS processes will provide an alternative approach to managing the competency development of procurement managers in English local government.

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Appendix 1: CIPS (2018). The Global Standards for Procurement and Supply

MANAGERIAL COMPETENCY LEVEL

Segment 6.7 * Strategic Sourcing

Knowledge: Will know and understand:	Capabilities: Will be able to::
The assessment of market factors in the development of a strategic sourcing or category management process such as: • Industry dynamics and pricing behaviour • Financial data on suppliers • Market demand and supply factors	Evaluate market factors that influence the supply market to assist the development of appropriate sourcing plans that shape markets and improves commercial leverage
Understand the business motivations, cost/margins and working practices of key suppliers	Advise colleagues and internal stakeholders on the implications of the business motivations, cost/margins and working practices of key suppliers
Techniques for assessing suppliers performance and capabilities	Undertake a strategic assessment of key suppliers using modelling and techniques of analysis
The assessment of sourcing options for strategic supplies of products or services including: • The type of contract • The duration of contract • Competitive/non-competitive sourcing • Number of suppliers and lotting strategies • The use of e-sourcing • Global sourcing/off shoring/low cost country sourcing or onshoring	Assess the sourcing options for supplies of products or services establishing the capability of suppliers and the supply chain prior to commitment
Internal stakeholder's involvement in strategic sourcing/category management	Assemble cross functional teams and consult with internal stakeholders to agree sourcing options for any specific category of purchase
The use of competition, direct negotiation or joint proposition improvement in strategic sourcing/ category management	Analyse the use of competition, direct negotiation or joint proposition improvement for the sourcing of categories and use as appropriate
The use of selection and award criteria relevant to the category of purchase	Develop and apply appropriate selection and award criteria and use to evaluate supplier proposals
Creating presentations on category plans	Develop category plans to define the approaches to be taken to sourcing categories and communicate to stakeholders

Appendix 2: CIPS (2018). The Global Standards for Procurement and Supply

MANAGERIAL COMPETENCY LEVEL

Segment 6.7 * Category Management

Knowledge: Will know and understand:	Capabilities: Will be able to::
The main categories of expenditure that will be subjected to category management	Develop hierarchies of categories for both direct and indirect expenditures that make use of category trees for category management and strategic procurement
The main models for the adoption of category management such as the CIPS Category Management Model	Evaluate and apply an appropriate methodology to achieve improved category management that standardises processes and the use of systems across the organisation
Data that is typically analysed to develop a category plan	Evaluate historical and forecasted data on categories of spend to help formulate options and make recommendations to achieve value for money outcomes
The development of a sourcing plan for the category	Create a Category Management plan that makes use of the division into lots or range of contracts to be awarded and mitigate any potential impact of the lack of internal buy-in
Tools and techniques that are typically applied to map categories of direct and indirect expenditures such as: • Matrices • Supply chain mapping • Porter's 5 Forces model • Market share/market growth • STEEPLED and SWOT • Technology route maps	Evaluate and provide advice on categories of direct and indirect expenditure
Market factors that are typically assessed in the development of a category management plan including: • Industry dynamics • Competitiveness • Pricing behaviour • Technology drivers	Develop a category management plan by analysing market factors using early market engagement/dialogue when appropriate and making use of market data to inform decision making
The behavioural and technical skills required for the implementation of a category management methodology	Demonstrate effective behavioural and technical skills across the organisation, with suppliers and other stakeholders for effective category management
Behavioural • Communication with stakeholders and suppliers • Influencing skills • Working with teams and cross functional working • Acting as a change agent	
Technical • Financial management and cost analysis • Supply chain analysis • Supply base research • Sourcing processes • Risk management • Negotiation Demonstrate effective behavioural and technical skills across the organisation, with suppliers and other stakeholders for effective category management MANAGERIAL COMPETENCY LEVEL	

Appendix 3: CIPS (2018). The Global Standards for Procurement and Supply

MANAGERIAL COMPETENCY LEVEL

Segment 6.8 * Developing Organisational Expertise in Category Management

Knowledge: Will know and understand:	Capabilities: Will be able to::
The main models for the adoption of category management/strategic procurement	Evaluate and apply an appropriate methodology using contemporary techniques to achieve improved category management/strategic sourcing
Segmentation of purchases and the use of techniques to profile expenditures	Lead colleagues and other internal stakeholders to understand the dynamics of the supply chain and to recommend appropriate category strategies
Category team selection and stakeholder engagement	Encourage collaboration between procurement/supply chain personnel with stakeholders to develop effective category plans
The development of business cases, acquisition strategies and category management	Actively lead the development and promotion of effective business cases, acquisition and category strategies with stakeholders that reflect organisational objectives
Approaches to supply market research/early supplier engagement/pre-contract dialogue	Promote the consideration of the consequences of decisions that impact on suppliers and supply markets to create a culture of innovative sourcing solutions
The implementation of category plans	Analyse and react to stakeholder feedback, and implement appropriate category plans to standardise organisational processes and systems
Strategic supplier relationship management	Develop and maintain the use of structured approaches to supplier relationship management supported by colleagues and other internal stakeholders
Approaches to category cost driver analysis	Apply cost driver analysis across key categories of spend to support assessment of cost and value

Appendix 4: Evaluation Criteria Guidelines for Systematic Literature Review

Criterion	Evaluation Criteria Description
Criterion 1:	Sample selection and criteria for inclusion and exclusion
	*** Defintion of inclusion and exclusion criteria:** Are criteria and the decision rules for thde inclusion and exclusion of articles discussed and clearly stated? (Objectve statement)
	*** Thoroughness and accuracy:** Are wide ranges of areas and related contexts considered? Is the research field of the paper appropriate? Are the key concepts described and have the most important topics in the literature been identified? Does the literature review critically point out limitations and conflicts, and does it delineate ambiguities and boundaries? (Subjective statement)
	*** Quality assessment of sample selection:** Is theories of papaer selection described and are the selection criteria mentioned? Are only titles and / or abstracts read by the authors in order to exclude irrelevant articles, or was (in all cases of reasonable doubt) each article completely read? (Objective statement)
	*** Sufficiuency of sample description:** Is the selction strategy clearly explained and is the chosen approach consistent and verifiable? Is it possible to reproduce the selection process? (subjective statement)
	*** Appropriateness of the sample:** Is the sample consistent to the research question and can the results be generalised? (Subjective statement)
Criterion 2:	Description of search process
	*** Sufficiency of search strategy description:** Are the search process and the search strategy described and documented (e.g. the period covered)? Are multiple database used for key word search? Is a manual seasrch complemented by a search in electronic database? If so, are the numbers and names of journals that were searched given, and are the methods (e.g. rankings) of journal selection described and justified? Are backward and forward searches applied? Is the sample reduction process described? Is the number of identified articles mentioned? (Objectives)
	*** Consistency and appropriateness of search strategy:** Is the chosen approach consistent and verifiable? Is any 'grey literature' (material that is not subject to editorial control or peer review, such as working papers) covered and was the inclusion appropriate? If not, are publication biases analysed? (Subjective staement)

Source: Adapted from Hochren et al., (2012)

Appendix 5: Guideline Steps on how to synthesize literature review

1	• Determine and identify similarities or commonalities among articles by group in terms of: Concepts, patterns, relationships (for example (1) Did the authors use similar conceptual or theoretical framework, sample participants, methodologies or instruments and procedure to collect data? (2) How and in what ways were the findings similar? (3) Are any studies an extension of another?
2	• Determine the differences or contracdiction's among the artiglesd by group. (for exampleas stated in (1) above
3	• Determine general observations and conclusions about each topicgiven the relationships inferred from the group of articles within each topic. (For example: determine the existence of any recurring concepts, relationships , pattern, or themes and of any of these are in need of futher inquiry)
4	• Formulating the Interpretation: Which is about making connections between and among ideas and concepts. (It is about applying what you are researching within a larger framework, thereby providing a new way of looking at a phenomenon. Emphasize relatedness.

Source: Dale et al., (2012)
https://methods.sagepub.com/Book/completing-your-qualitative-dissertation

Appendix 6: All GROUPs sorted : Google Scholar & ProQuest (ABI/INFORM) and SNOWBALL articles				
Organizational Context	Public	Public	Public	Public
Database	Google Scholar	Google Scholar	Google Scholar	Google Scholar
Research Type	Document Review	Empirical case study	Emipirical	Emipirical
SOURCES	1	3	4	5
Sources (Author/(Year)	**JG Murray - Public Money & Management, 2014**	**D Boyd - Proceedings 27th Annual ARCOM Conference, 2011**	**Gareth R.T. White, Scott Parfitt, Chris Lee, and Rachel Mason-Jones. (2016).**	**C Tsinopoulos, D Greenwell, M Macaulay... -(2012).**
Description on what to do	Enter notes on how source 1 connects to, provides information/insight on, increases knowledge of, etc. theme 1	Enter notes on how source 3 connects to, provides information/insight on, increases knowledge of, etc. theme 3	Enter notes on how source 1 connects to, provides information/insight on, increases knowledge of, etc. theme 4	Enter notes on how source 2 connects to, provides information/insight on, increases knowledge of, etc. theme 5
THEMES - listing				
Dimension of concept of Category Management and strategic sourcing and implications in LGA	**The Subject Area**: A Debate: UK public procurement **The Argument** is that Adoption of a category management approach: Category management takes a strategic view of the organization's spend and makes use of segmentation to develop more targeted sourcing strategies (O'Brien, 2009). Spiller et al. (2014 The application of a category management approach as being one of the fundamentals of deriving value from the procurement Given the adoption of category management, it is clearly not embedded throughout the UK public sector and therefore	**The Subject Area**: System change in the purchasing of construction materials by local authorities **The Argument** is that Local authorities are major clients of the construction industry for new build, refurbishment and maintenance. With such a significant purchase value, it has been suggested that LAs should collaborate and aggregate their purchasing so as to achieve reduced costs and better availability of materials for their projects. With key driving features such as assessing real savings, moving to standardisation of	**The Subject Area**: Challenges to the development of strategic procurement in public sector **The Argument** is that The development of category management (CM) as a strategic method of procurement for example, presents significant challenges to organizations and their personnel. CM is a radical transformation of the established view of procurement, expanding its responsibilities from demand side cost control to include responsibility for supply-side cost control. CM challenges the established structure of an organization and requires procurement	**The Subject Area**: the consequences of Public Procurement Practices in the North East. **The Arguments** is that Differences in procurement practice below the OJEU thresholds (Official Journal of the European Union (previously called ... a certain financial threshold according to EU legislation) were clearly identified as a major problem. There were significant differences among the purchasing authorities in regard to their approach to category management. Five out of nine purchasers engage in category management for procurement processes:

Appendix 7: Similarities and Differences of three Interpretative Approaches between Phenomenography, Grounded Theory and Phenomenology

Subject Comparison	**Phenomenography**	**Grounded Theory**	**Phenomenology**
Object of study	Is to study the understanding of the phenomenon by categories of subjects (participants) meanings of a phenomenon	Is to study understanding of phenomenon by constructing theory that is derived from an iterative description and ordering of phenomenon	Is to study understanding of the phenomenon experiencing and reflecting upon life world of the subjects
Research question examples	What are the qualitative different meanings that participants give on the experience of for example “developing professional competence”	What do people understand by the notion of “developing professional competence”	What are the inner and outer realities that describe what it mean to “developing professional competence”
Epistemological/Ontological perspectives	Empirical, Interpretivist, Constructivist	Empirical, Interpretivist, Constructivist	Interpretivist, Constructivist
Data collection method	Interview, Texts	Interview, Texts, Journals, observations even quantitative data	Interview, participants observation, language analysis, texts, literature etc
Analytical Tools	Interpretation of sections of the text and whole accounts. Cut and paste	Theory derived from data through interplay between the researcher and the data whereby the relational comparison of responses yields theory of phenomenon. Coding of actual section text.	Empirical analysis of pre-reflective experiential material and or reflective interpretation of the aspects of meaning or meaningfulness that is associated with the phenomenon. Determining essences of experience
When does the analysis occur	Post data collection (may have follow-up collection to verify expand meanings)	During data collection and post collection	During data collection and post-data collection
Relationship between data collection analysis and theory formulation	All three stages are separate but intuitive interpretation can help each stage and some iteration possible	All three stages are “fused” occur simultaneously and iteratively	Variable methods
Rigour	Seeks reliability through systematic reduction of data and external checks. Secondary researcher examines categories made by the primary researcher.	Seeks reliability through the positivist approach of reducing subject responses using a systematic method of interpretation.	Seeks reliability by arguing that the interpretations of essence are reliable through immersing the reader within the life world of the subject.
Generalisability	Limited to similar population	Extensive across populations	Limited to the time situation and the researcher

Source: adapted from Barnard et al (1999:214); Kinnunen et al (2012:213) and Starks et al (2017:1373)

Appendix 8: University of Chester Faculty of Business and Management Participant Informed Consent Form

Title of Study:
Conceptions of Competency for Accomplishing Effective Job Performance for Category Management and Strategic Sourcing processes in Local Government Authorities in England

Name of Researcher: Gregory A. Benn-Ohikuare

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet, dated …………, for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. CW
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my care or legal rights being affected. CW
3. I agree to take part in the above study. CW

CW	12/02/2018	CW
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Gregory A Benn-ohikuare	22/12/2017	GA Bennohikuare
Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
Gregory A Benn-ohikuare	22/12/2017	GA Bennohikuare
Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 9: Participant Information Document University of Chester Faculty of Business and Management Research Ethics Policy and Procedures (September 2016, version 8.9.16)

Title of study:
Conceptions of competency for Accomplishing Effective Job Performance for Category Management and Strategic Sourcing processes in Local Government Authorities in England

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this exploratory study aims to understand the qualitative different ways Strategic Procurement Managers' in English Local Government experience conceptions of competency category management and strategic sourcing process in order to contribute to body of knowledge for the field of procurement and supply management.
A written report will be produced at the end of the project. The findings from the study will be used to inform the approach/(es) used to further enhance Strategic Procurement Managers' in English Local Government.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen randomly as one member of the group of advanced Strategic Procurement Managers' in English Local Government ESPP's in LGA's with the necessary experience in local government and commercial environment and length of service and sufficient exposure for delivering category management and strategic sourcing process.

Appendix 10: Open-ended scenario Questionnaire

Open- ended scenario Questionnaire

Category Management in procurement and Supply scenario

Scenario:

This is a a Local Government setup company. The Board of Management of a leading company that provides facilities management services (such as the maintenance of buildings, catering, cleaning and security) to customers that operate in both the private and public sectors, is looking to implement a category management process to improve their procurement and supply.

Questions:

(1) How would you evaluate the differences between a reactive sourcing process and a strategic sourcing process?

(2) What methodology would you propose that can be applied to categorise the company's mix of expenditures?

(3) To help initiate and prepare for the introduction of a category management what types and sources of data which can be used to assess current market conditions of a supply market and what are the commercial issues that have been experienced with current suppliers?

(4) For the successful implementation of a category management strategy, what is vital to obtain the acceptance and support of internal stakeholders and explain how this acceptance and support can be best achieved?

(5) How can you justify the performance measures that can be used to assess the success of a category management process?

(6) Justify THREE examples of performance measures that can be used to assess the success of a category management process

(7) How would you assess the exit arrangements that should be applied if a category management process were to prove unsuccessful?

RESPONSES: (Please use separate sheet for responses

Appendix 11: Open-ended scenario Questionnaire

Open- ended scenario Questionnaire

Sourcing in procurement and supply scenario

The case: Local Government Enterprise: THE PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT COMPANY

Introduction

The Protective Equipment Company (PEC) is a medium-sized enterprise in the private sector. PEC manufactures and sells a range of protective work-wear and equipment which is designed to withstand the most hazardous working conditions. The products are made to extremely high quality standards and PEC constantly updates its products to reflect different operating environments and health and safety at work requirements. New product development is often focused primarily on technical excellence rather than profitability

Procurement Activities

The current buyer at PEC has been in the position for six months having been promoted from purchasing assistant when the previous buyer retired. Due to her limited experience combined with the complexity of the product range and the need for high levels of quality, she has found it difficult to influence sourcing strategy. Formal procurement procedures and systems at PEC are very limited. Currently, the buyer waits to receive a requisition from the production function to place orders for equipment, materials and products. This means that orders are usually urgent and the buyer has little opportunity to review alternative suppliers or sourcing approaches.

Low value maintenance, repair and operations (MRO) requirements cause particular problems as the requisitions are difficult to aggregate. This causes excessive and time-consuming administration for the buyer.

Testing requirements

Pressure testing machinery used for testing the quality of seams in the protective work-wear is nearing the end of its life and will soon require replacement. Product testing is essential to confirm final quality of manufacture and conformance to industry standards.

The test equipment is highly specialised and will be costly to replace. Also, recent machine maintenance highlighted both the cost and the long lead times of the MRO items required to keep the machine operational. If the equipment is not replaced, the test work will need to be outsourced to a facility specialising in this type of service provision.

Supplier data

Recently, the buyer has become concerned that some of her key suppliers could be facing financial difficulties. However, she is uncertain how to investigate the financial position of these suppliers. The information left by the previous buyer is several years out of date and the current buyer is concerned that their position could now be significantly worse.

The buyer believes that she needs to research the supply market in order to gather more information on external supplier capabilities. This will allow her to identify alternative suppliers with the necessary technical and quality standards and good financial stability.

Question:

What do you think is the best way to examine the sourcing approaches that could be used by the buyer at PEC to more effectively source safety products and materials from suppliers, using three different approaches?

RESPONSES: (Please use separate sheet for responses

Appendix 12: Questions Guide using the 8-step circle of Category Management and Strategic Sourcing processes

THE EXPERIENCE OF STRATEGIC PROCUREMENT MANAGERS'' IN ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONCEPTIONS OF COMPETENCY FOR ACCOMPLISHING EFFECTIVE JOB PERFORMANCE FOR CATEGORY MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC SOURCING PROCESSES

Your critical incident will be a part of a study that is exploring the competency needed to accomplish category management and strategic sourcing process as perceived by Strategic Procurement Managers' in English Local Government.

Of particular interest are experiences that were particularly memorable or outstanding with regarding the conceptions of competency for category management and strategic sourcing process from experience. Please reflect on an experience that impacted the way you practice as a strategic procurement practitioner in category management and strategic sourcing process.

Please note there are two sections to this report. **Section (A) deals with general experience in relation to your role as a strategic procurement practitioner** and **section (B) relates to what and how you conceptualize competency for category management and strategic sourcing process in its eight steps.**

Section A:

Please think back over your career as a strategic procurement practitioner in category management and strategic sourcing. Please **describe a memorable experience where you were surprised at your ability (know what) to deal with a challenge of practice**. **How did you feel prepared to deal with this challenge based on your experience? Where does the 'surprise' of your ability to meet the challenge of practice emanate from**? For example**,** perhaps you reflected "I am surprised that I had known what to do during the situation". Or perhaps you reflected "Where and how did I learn what I needed to know to meet the challenge of practice?

Appendix 13: Questions Guide using the 8-step circle of Category Management and Strategic Sourcing processes

The reflective questions are:

• When did the experience occur?

• How long had you been practicing as a strategic procurement practitioner in category management and strategic sourcing?

• Who was involved in the experience (titles, not names please)?

• Where did the experience occur (within your organizational setting, inter-organizational setting, conferences, project meetings, learning on your own, in a formal educational setting, incidentally during task processes)?

• How did this experience influence the competencies as a practicing strategic procurement manager in category management and strategic sourcing? How did it impact the way in which you practice?

• How have you incorporated this knowing into your practice?

• How has this experience been an experience of learning?

Section B:

Based on your experience as an advanced Strategic Procurement Manager in English Local Government, please describe in detail (to the best of your ability) with specifics, of the competency you perceived are required **learning from experience** including your **feelings** and **thoughts** about **a critical incident in a procurement category management project**, using the **8 steps Strategic Sourcing Process as depicted below to explain what and how you conceptualize the competency for category management and strategic sourcing process in each of the eight steps**

Excerpt: Research interview transcription into Word document

Section A: Personal details

Date: 09/03/2018
Participant: (CW)
Position: Strategic Procurement Manager
Length of Time in current position: 3 – 4 years
Qualifications / education attainments: MCIPS (Member of Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply); MCIPS
Organization: Somerset County Council
Sector/context: Local Government Authority {LGA}
Geographical Area: England

Section B:
1.Description of **ways of experiencing competency for in category management and strategic sourcing processes** through technical and personal attribute (**knowledge, skills and behaviours)** as perceived by the Strategic Procurement Manager in Local Government Authorities (LGA's)**.**
2.Description of **how Procurement Managers experience competency for category management and strategic sourcing processes**

RESEARCHER (GBO): Thank you for accepting to support my research project.
Based on your experience as a PM in LGA, could you please describe in detail, to the best of your ability, with specifics, as to what way you experience competency in strategic sourcing and category management (SS&CM) and how you experienced competency in SS&CM processes. You could include your feelings and thoughts about learning what you needed to know knowledge, skills and behaviours in SS&CM processes.
What I am thinking off in order to facilitate our conversation is, it may be good idea to pick a project or a programme or an event that you are very familiar with, that you can talk me through. Obviously I will prompt you with questions as we go along. In addition, what I would like to use as a tool in order to facilitate this conversation is the 8-steps category management and strategic sourcing process. Is that something you think we could discuss?

PARTICIPANT (CW):Yeah, Sure, So, I have been in this role for sixteen months and when I applied, it was a role … Ammm.. we have a management structure here that can support category management and strategic sourcing process and we do have a cross matrix working to certain level and I took over the responsibility of what we will call the 'place and people' category, everything to do with 'Highways and Infrastructures, Libraries, Leisure facilities, Waste and Trading. Before I started the role I was in the role for about between four to five months and then one of my counterpart left and I assumed some of the responsibilities she was also doing and that now looks 'People and Places' procurement category function. Now everything I now do is for looking after 'Places, Adults and Children' procurement category. So to that extent, some of the career progression and some of the experiences, I think I have, has not just been sitting in the role but it's all about the re-structuring that has taken place and assuming additional responsibilities.

	Excerpt: Interview data transfer into Excel document
SS	**Column 1**
	Raw data
	(To be read & Re-read)
1	Ok, I can do that. I have got a project in mind I can talk to you about. Alright, so
2	category strategy that I undertook about February last yea,. Ammm…. before
3	point, I was getting to know the category, I moved into different category
4	speciality, 'Special Education Needs and Disability'. Amm…. Just about six months
5	before that I have just been new in this area. I have just been learning about it. So the
6	process I went through was initially, this is what I generally do when approaching new
7	category. The first thing I want to know is, what urgent needs addressing, the urgent
8	issues were, School, special running Schools i.e. private schools, independent schools,
9	they would approach us, the County, to ask for a fee upset in order words to increase
10	their fees. There are a number of request that were outstanding that would refuse
11	them, some that needed investigation before we can decide whether we want to
12	refuse them or not and the tracker-sheets, I just want to get my head around what
MP	Column 1
	Raw data
	(To be read & Re-read)
1	This is really up my street since I have been in the procurement industry. There is big
2	governance. I just think procurement is a … Ammm… I should I put it, an industry which
3	is dying in the public sector and the whole reason for the dying is because of how people
4	become procurement professionals , they absolutely have no value. They could speak to
5	anybody especially my age group coming from a different background. I was in the
6	Navy, Parks Manager, and Achievement Manager and then one day I was managing
7	maintenance contract then I went into procurement. So I looked into this and similar to
8	the sort of diagram you have for my own team. The biggest problem that I will say is,
9	recruitment, is just the experience of the people coming through and one of the biggest
10	question I have already tables to my colleagues and team is that , tell me what
LR	Column 1
	Raw data
	(To be read & Re-read)
1	Yes of course. There are different heads of management within it and they all come
2	under one directorate as they call it. There is a requirement. A requirement we cannot
3	avoid is that by law, we have to provide a coroner service as in England and technically,
4	we have no control over that person. They get appointed and we pay for their services
IanR	Column 1
	Raw data
	(To be read & Re-read)
1	I think that's fine. If I start from a broad position, then we can start to drill down. I
2	suppose, my background, I have been in local government procurement for around 9

Appendix 16

Excerpt: Selected parts of interview data identifying themes, significant words, extracts underlined, labelled with one or more key words making bold interesting segments

SS	Column 1	
	Raw data	*Initial Coding*
	(To be read & Re-read)	*What do I think about what they are saying?*
		"Line by Line"
1	Ok, I can do that. I have got a project in mind I can talk to you about. Alright, so	*For **CATEGORY SEGMENTATION** process step*
2	category strategy that I undertook about February last yea,. Ammm.... before	*She undertook category strategy*
3	point, I was getting to know the category, **I moved into different category**	*Getting to know the category and moved into a a different category speciality*
4	**speciality, 'Special Education Needs and Disability'. Amm.... Just about six months**	
5	**before that I have just been new in this area. I have just been learning about it. So the**	*Just been learning about category strategy*
6	process I went through was initially, this is **what I generally do when approaching new**	*She goes through a process of learning when approaching new category*
7	**category. The first thing I want to know is, what urgent needs addressing, the urgent**	*She always want to know what issue is urgent that needs addressing*
8	**issues were**, School, special running Schools i.e. private schools, independent schools,	
9	they would approach us, the County, to ask for a fee upset in order words to increase	
10	their fees. There are a number of request that were outstanding that would refuse	*When request are outstanding they need to be investigated before decision is made*
11	them, some that needed investigation before we can decide whether we want to	
12	refuse them or not and the tracker-sheets, I just want to get my head around what	*She gets her head around the trial situations*
13	was the trial situation in this area. Amm... something like that, **the first thing I tend to**	
14	**do is to go and meet the stakeholders**. Ammm.... **That is the key most important**	*The way she dopes that is to have a meeting with stakeholders*
15	**people**. In this particular speciality area, **I met the head, the organizational head, Head**	*She meets all the principle stakeholders*
16	**of Market strategy and Commissioner and I ask them what their expectations** are for	*To ask about stakeholders expectations*
17	the Children. Ammm .. What they need, what to get from them and try to understand	*By so doing establishing what the needs are and an understaning of predecessor work done on it*
18	what my predecessor had done with them.	
19	So in terms of what would I do in terms of the service. **What I would do is to look into**	
20	**each school, their culture and combe through their account and try to understand their**	*She looks into each suppliers culture and examine their account so as to understand*
21	**business model, their specialist area** was I expect from their fess. It's actually quite	*their business model and their specialist area expecially if the supplier is new*
22	difficult, if you are coming in fresh **because this is a specialist area.** This is not, if you	
23	ike comparing.. You know ery... stationery companies or what eve. **Education is really**	

Appendix 17

Excerpt: Development of coding structure as an analytical framework			
Raw Data Reference	**Meaning Units**	**Condensation of codes: Open coding**	**Initial Conceptions with functional attributes**
SS134-135	I **held a couple of workshops.**	Conducting workshops enhances professional development	*** Leading and Deciding** (Coaching)
MP97	You have got to **allow a lot of shadow, a lot of hand holding**	To provide 'shadowing' for junior staff enhances the acquisition of competence	*** Leading and Deciding** (Leading and Supervising / Coaching / Empoering Staff / Motivating Others / Developing Staff)
MP111-115	that can only come with experience.I think there needs to be **much more mentoring**	To provide 'mentoring' for junior staff enhances the acquisition of competence	*** Leading and Deciding** (Motivating Others)
MP135-138	the **empowerment makes them learn research** it	Learning research empowers knowledge	*** Leading and Deciding** (Empowering Staff)
MP164-168	**Without the right leader** all the rest that follows here is a waste of time Procurement needs a CPO with the attitude of integrity, professional expertise and kills, a sense of responsibility, motivates and full of initiative and able to work under pressure to deliver results and business, align outcomes (not just savings). the more I recognise that for all the systems, processes, technology and resources, the more I recognise that for all the systems, processes, technology and resources,	The need to have the right leader is critical for the maintenance of competence	*** Leading and Deciding** (Leading and Supervisor)

Excerpt: Data summarised into initial Category			
Raw Data Reference	**Meaning Units**	**Initial Conceptions**	**Category of Description**
SS134-135	I held a couple of workshops.	* Leading and Decising (Coaching)	Leading and Deciding
CB61	Demonstrating firm attitude when necessary	Leading and Deciding (Taken Action)	Leading and Deciding
CB62	Driving things through	* Leading and Deciding (Taken Action)	Leading and Deciding
SS118-121	I engaged with our partners in other local government authoritie on their view and I eventually got and I produced a report	* Supporting and Cooperating (Consulting others) * Analysing and Interpreting (Writing a Report / Writing Corectly)	Supporting and Cooperating
MP17-18	what we call the 'head of the rabbit'; you have got a loads and loads of power of persuasion that surrounds it	* Interacting and Presenting (Power of persuading and Influencing)	Interacting and Presenting
MP50-53	So what I say when I do my workshop with my team is that, if you are in a meeting and you got up and you left and nobody cares, you are not adding value that you could add, that is redressing itself without using the strategic sourcing process, which they could add value to sourcing cycle because of the negotiations step-mark, what we do is, we actually take this apart and say I could add value by doing the following and then we find out where their weakness are, their knowledge and their skills and expertise. they have to actually go into partnership say with the construction engineers surveyors and they have to pick and sip through where they are doing their procurement activity and	* Analyzing and Interpreting (Analyzing)	General mental ability, openness to new experience

Appendix 19

Excerpt: Initial emerging themes by participants

Emerging Themes	Participants									
	CB	CW	DG	DW	LR	MP	IR	JT	EL	SS
business relationship										
decide to do workshops in the middle of the tender process										
further nvolvement when we do the training										
going to work in partnership										
I met with other colleagues to get feedback										
understand the wider environment.										
understanding how you learn										
You are learning as you go along										
A good sense of opportunity										
Ability to engage in collaboration										
Ability to liaise										
Acquire intelligent negotiation										
Acquiring a range of knowledge										
acquiring experience from across sectors										
Acquisition of skills										
Adopt selling skill										
Adopting early market engagement										
Adoting a collaborative approach										
Aquiring good research approach										
Aquiring working knowledge										
Assisting suppliers for structure and collaboration										
aware of the complexity										
Awareness of the regulatory framework										
Being part of community of practice										
Being part of Learning Network										
subscribed to several data sources such as Knowledge Hu										
Build up stakeholder relationship										
Capture & reporting on performance using system										
collaboration to strengthen position										
collaboration with other organisation										
Comprehensive feedback										
Continious improvement journey										
Continious Learning										

Excerpt: Pooling of each indvidual transcripts to reflect Quotes and Pod of meaning			
Categories of Description from Raw data			
Raw data Reference	**Raw data for (Quotes)**	**Pod of Meaning**	**Initial Themes**
CW65-70	When doing market engagement we employ a 'light-touch' approach so as to **encourgare suppliers t**o responde to leading questions so as to create bonding and this helps procedures	Acquisition of knowledge [Apllication]	encourgare suppliers t
SS46-48	I ended up **developing the negotiation plan** for **special providers**, who is a very large provider **who we felt were not value for money and difficult to work with**	Developing knowledge for complexity	Developing negotiation plan
MP335-337	**How to reduce that gap and get the knowledge**, and some of them will come back and say, w**e want to know from the people that do i**t above me of my peers, will not do any training, or **cascading knowledge** or	Developing knowledge for complexity	Reducing the gap and get the knowledge
MP394-395	you need to understand that it is not all about procurement, **it is about inter-dependency with legislation and more training companies are coming through, so I have had to learn**	Developing knowledge for complexity	Undrstanding inter-dependency
MP479-482	**we have got to analyse the value, how do you go about doing that, we don't, you leave it to QSC (Quality Survey Contrac**t) about doing that, we don't, you leave it to QSC (Quality Survey Contract) **I think that's one big pitfall I think in procurement, you have got the legal side, you have got finance** and I think we	Developing knowledge for complexity	Understand how to analyse value
LR291	We have **developed and contract mobilization plan** that sits inside our Contract Management framework. This sets out all of the key contract management activities to be undertaken at each level of contract (1 – 6 with 1 being the largest most **complex contracts)**	Developing knowledge for complexity	Handling complex contracts
DG279-284	**Being able to engage** with stakeholders and buiding relationships	Developing knowledge for complexity	Egage with stakeholder
DG286-287	we have less money available, what worked well, how did it work well, what, what bit can **Strategy iteration** and knowledge management	Developing knowledge for complexity	strategy iteration
MP181-182	CONDUIT: **To engage supply market innovatively, to find solutions to business challenges.**	Developing knowledge for complexity	Solutions to business challenges
SS71-72	I had **used Porter 5 Forces model**	Developing knowledge for complexity	Used a particular model I learnt
SS81-83	I started to focus on **developing strategy and having an output in mind of that strategy** and trying to go through	Developing knowledge for complexity	Developing strategy
SS93-94	So I learnt a lot about it. I **learnt about that there is no incentive in the market place on how to perform** but it is	Developing knowledge for complexity	Learnt a lot about

Appendix 21

Identifying Referential and Structural Dimensions

		Structural aspect	
Category	Referential aspect (Meaning)	Internal horizon	External horizon
1	The exploration and exploitation of stakeholder management characteristics that brings abount the accomplishment of job effectivenes for the category management and strategic sourcing processes	The ability to engage and manage relevant stakeholders who affect and or could be affected by organizations activities	This is delimited by various functional attributes such as: Change Management, Using Cognitive abilities, Initiatives,Leadership, Decision Making. Being Resilient, Communication,Execute, that relise on the antecedence of indivudal motives, traits, self concepts, knowledge and skills
2	The exploration and exploitation of socioi-technical knowledge characteristics that brings abount the accomplishment of job effectivenes for the category management and strategic sourcing processes	the ability to balance and integrate technological and social aspects	This is delimited by various functional attributes such as: Analytical thinking, Being Innovative /Using Techiques & Tools, Conceptual Thinking, Enduring Capacities & Other Characteristics, Information Seeking, knowledge Acquisition, Knowledge Management. Organizing. Problem Solving, Professional Value awareness, Project Management, Project Management Awareness, System Thinking, Thinking strategically and analytically, Using Techniques & Tools, Using Techniques & Tools & Technology, that relise on the antecedence of indivudal motives, traits, self concepts, knowledge and skills
3	The exploration and exploitation of achievement orientation characteristics that brings abount the accomplishment of job effectivenes for the category management and strategic sourcing processes	the ability to interpret, react and execute tasks, resulting in different patterns of knowledge, skills, ablities and other characteristics used for acheving greater value	This is delimited by various functional attributes such as: Relationship Building, Information seeking / Influencing. Communication /Influencing, Maintaining integrity, Building Trust, Reflective & Awareness, Adaptability, Adaptability, Plant seeds with Stakeholderes/Build Reputation & Trust, Understand Stakeholder Power Positioning, that relise on the antecedence of indivudal motives, traits, self concepts, knowledge and skills